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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LOCATING SUBJECTS: CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

LINDA WARLEY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL, 1994

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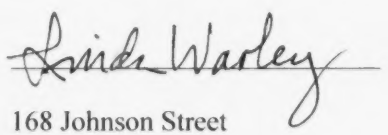

168 Johnson Street
Apartment 2
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 1Y1

October 7, 1994

Do you believe that space can give life, or take it away, that space has power?

bell hooks
Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics

Those years we shared that space
it wasn't just geography
our lives were softly colliding

Anna Couani
"The Fold" *The Harbour Breathes*

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled LOCATING SUBJECTS: CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY submitted by LINDA WARLEY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Dr. Stephen Slemon, Supervisor

Dr. Paul Hjartarson

Dr. Shirley Neuman

Dr. Daphne Read

Dr. Nasrin Rahimieh

Dr. Sidonie Smith

September 23, 1994

To my father,
who taught me that language had both beauty and power.

ABSTRACT

The central argument of this dissertation is that discourses of place shape autobiographical subjectivity. Drawing primarily on the work of postcolonial and feminist critics, but also on certain insights of social theorists and cultural geographers, this study reconsiders the ways in which the autobiographical subject has been conventionally theorized as an "unlocated" subject. By arguing that place is not just empty, neutral background, the project seeks to correct this a-spatial bias and argues for readings of autobiography that always take the subject's relation to specific places into account. This dissertation focuses on contemporary autobiographies by Canadians and Australians, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal. It considers how colonial and nationalist discourses inscribe these places and render them problematic sites of identification for particular subjects.

Opening with a chapter that examines how autobiography studies has been preoccupied with a subject that is produced solely with reference to either history or language, this study moves on to consider three material sites that figure prominently in the process of subject formation: the body, the home, and the neighbourhood. Chapter two explores bodies as sites of psychic investment and discursive inscription in Jane Willis's *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* and David Malouf's *12 Edmonstone Street,* and argues that discourses of race produce a Native female body and an ethnic male body as alien and unaccommodated. Chapter three takes up the vexed issue of home in settler postcolonial writing and explores how two white autobiographers--Gabrielle Roy and Jill Ker Conway--construct themselves as marginal subjects within nations where masculinist and/or Anglophone norms have shaped the dominant society. One of the arguments of this dissertation is that autobiography participates in the broader political project of decolonization, and chapter four investigates two aboriginal texts--Sally Morgan's *My Place* and Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*--that signal how the work of

decolonization in Canada and Australia might proceed. This chapter also reimagines Canadian and Australian subjectivity in terms of the multicultural neighbourhood and proposes a spatial model that allows for heterogeneity within the notion of the subject and fosters communication and collaboration across cultural differences.

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From the members of my supervisory committee I have also learned something about what it means to be a professional academic. I have the highest repect for each of them, and I am confident that all of their lessons will take me forward from here.

My parents have always believed in my passion for literature and my desire to do intellectual work. Over the years they have kept me going, in more ways than one. I thank them, in particular, for believing in my work enough to at times put money on it. But I also thank them, as well as other members of my family, for helping me through some difficult personal moments.

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Foreword

I know right away that my clothing is all wrong. Although my yellow anorak and knee-length zip-up suede boots had been enough to keep the damp and chill away in England, they offer little protection against the winter elements in my new country. It is December 1969, the week after Christmas. I am eleven years old and at Toronto International airport. While my parents busy themselves with luggage and greeting the friend who has come to meet us, my brother and I--both of us shivering--gape and marvel at the splendid airport and the enormous cars in the parking garage. Everything is so big! Out-sized. Sprawling. Much grander than I had anticipated. What is this place that we have come to?

We pile into the friend's car--easily big enough to hold a family of four and all of our luggage--and drive off towards our new home. I am sleepy but my eyes are riveted to the passing nightscape. The snow banks seem to be about ten feet high, and they sparkle in the light of the street lamps. The road is a wide superhighway. The monster cars drive by at incredible speeds. Everything is bigger, faster, glitzier than I had been prepared for. If we had been emigrating to America, I might have expected this, for movies and television had given me images of New York and Los Angeles. But Toronto? I had no mental picture of Toronto. In fact, until a few months prior to our arrival, I had no mental picture of Canada at all.

When my parents told me that we would be emigrating, I went to my village school library to find books that would tell me something about Canada. There weren't many, but the ones I did find portrayed the place in remarkably consistent terms. Canada, I learned, had all the features I associated with beautiful natural landscapes: mountains, lakes, oceans, forests, prairies (although I wasn't quite sure what a prairie was; I thought it must be something like a very big field). It had unspoiled wilderness. Vast forests. It was cold in winter with lots of snow, and people liked to ski; but it was

warm enough in summer to produce the great wheat harvest that went to feed the world. Actually there was quite a lot in those books about snow, wheat, and trees. There was stuff about mining too, but I wasn't particularly interested in rocks. Canada also had Indians and Eskimos, but most Canadians (judging by the photographs) looked just like us except that the men and boys had brush cuts and wore plaid shirts. I don't remember any pictures of women. Some men were lumberjacks or miners, but most, it seemed, were farmers. No wonder my father wanted to come here, I thought; being an Agricultural Economist he was interested in farming. If the books had said anything about Canada's major cities, this is not what had captured my attention. As far as I could tell, Canada was mainly either farmland or empty bush (although "bush" was a word not yet in my vocabulary). I had expected the space to be big, but not the things that filled it. On this my first night in Canada, then, I made an important discovery: actual places do not always fit the representations I have of them in my head.

Guelph, my new home, is a smallish city one hundred kilometers west of Toronto. Recently I have begun to think about just how completely appropriate this new place was as the place my family chose to emigrate to, how perfectly it represented us, how easy it was for us to take up residence and begin to formulate our new identities as "Canadians" there. Guelph, known as "the Royal City," was named after the Hanoverian branch of the English royal family, and I have always appreciated that German connection because I have one too. My mother is German, and, coincidentally, my relatives live near Hanover. But the real connection, of course, is to England. A large crown formed out of electric lights used to hang in the city square. It was somewhat dilapidated, and the lights never all worked, but rather than abandoning it altogether, the old crown was taken down some years ago, and a new one was made out of different coloured stones and embedded as a mosaic in the square. People generally don't like this new crown and complain because it is no longer so prominent and--worst of all--it gets walked on.

Thousands of feet trampling unheedingly on that most royal symbol. Such disrespect! I too have walked around it rather than over it.

I consciously set out to assimilate. Eleven-year-olds hate to be different. We move into a big house and we buy a big car, a station wagon, that ultimate symbol of the middle-class Canadian family. My mother takes me to a department store and buys me my first winter coat (rust coloured with brass buttons and a real fur collar), a white fake fur hat (all the rage at the time) and proper snow boots. I watch a lot of television (so many stations!) and marvel at the expensive gifts given away on game shows. I eat peanut butter, Cheez Whiz, and multi-coloured, sugary Froot Loops. When summer comes, friends take us on a "real Canadian holiday." This means camping and fishing, activities that none of us is in any way prepared for. We eat barbecued steak and corn on the cob for the first time. My mother and I both wear shorts. In public! My father wears knee socks with his shorts, colonial style.

In my new school I take "Social Studies," a subject I have never heard of, and this is where I begin to understand where the images of Canada I had brought with me came from. I read about Alexander MacKenzie and Jacques Cartier and learn that their thrilling and perilous voyages by canoe had charted the way for settlement and the "taming" and "civilizing" of the land. I read about fur. I also read a lot about pioneer farmers. And I gradually begin to understand why there are no Indians or Eskimos in my new hometown, as I had expected there to be: their way of life is part of the distant past. The few remaining Natives live in isolated, remote reserves either way up North or far out West. I understand that I am never likely to meet one. There are also no non-white faces in my school. It doesn't occur to me until years later to miss them. (There may have been a few non-white students in my school, of course, but at that time I couldn't see them.) Canadians, I decide, are a lot like me. Indeed, many of them have relatives in England or Scotland or Ireland. It is easy for me to fit in. All I have to do is lose my funny accent and get the names for things right. I have to start calling a jumper a

sweater and a pinafore dress a jumper. I learn that one gets a run in one's nylons, not a ladder in one's stockings. I learn to say tomaydo instead of tomahto, truck instead of lorry, and I learn that the boot of the car is called the trunk. Other than the language problem, my assimilation is easy. My whiteness and my Englishness make me not an immigrant (that term applies to people who speak foreign languages and look different), but a new citizen. I am accepted. I am even desirable because I bring with me certain knowledges and things--my record albums, for instance are always in demand at parties and are eventually stolen from me--that represent the mother country and its sophisticated, superior culture. Days before emigrating my father had taken me and my brother on a day trip to London. I've seen Buckingham Palace and the Tower, but more importantly, I've eaten in a restaurant in Soho and wandered through shops in Carnaby Street. I know what's "in." When I get to high school I will come to regret having unlearned my English accent, for it would have made me more attractive to the boys (although the accent they want is BBC English, not my Midlands guttural lingo).

It takes me only a few months to feel Canadian. At the same time, however, I hang on to my Englishness. When the rest of my family become Canadian citizens after the requisite five years, I hold back, thinking that one day I will go home to university and a superior education. I like Canada and its freedoms, but I am not ready to give up on my real home. There is a horrible surprise waiting for me. When I return to England nine years later, I find out that I am not English anymore, but a tourist like any other. This worrying thought is already upon me as I watch the passing scenery on the bus ride from Heathrow airport to Victoria Station. It will be all right, I think, when I get to Kegworth, my village, my home. But in Kegworth the swings and the roundabout in the playground where I had spent so many hours don't look right. The chemist's shop is in the wrong place. I can't find the jetty that leads down the hill to my friend Elaine's house. The "Loughborough Road" sign means nothing to me, for I can't picture where the road leads. I stand in front of the house in which I lived my childhood and I feel

nothing, except, perhaps, a longing to feel something--sentiment, nostalgia, regret, loss. I assume that the place has changed; but of course, the truth is that it's me who has changed. My village, the place of my origin, the place where the bed in which I was born is located, is no longer mine.

I meet with old school friends and am conscious of the distance of time, space, and experience between us. My friends don't know what to make of me either, especially when I launch into a defensive analysis of why we left England. They have all stayed in the village, living just streets away from their mothers. They plan to live out their lives there. But we left, and the decision to emigrate--though not mine--needs to be justified. Somehow I find myself dutifully reciting the narratives of Canadian nationalism, words about freedom, equality, material wealth, and social progress, words about vast empty spaces and untamed wilderness. I tell them about my pilgrimage to Vancouver by train the year before. Five days continuous travel and you're still in the same country! It's a truly wonderful place! My friends hear all this, I think, as boasting. I hear myself speaking the problem of divided loyalties. Why, when I have been so desperate to go home, do I now so vehemently promote the myth of Canada as the land of golden opportunity?

What I discovered on that trip back to England was just how Canadian I had become. Home for me had changed its location and its meaning. It was no longer bound up with ideas of birth, ancestry, land, the house in which I was born or the village life that had constituted my community, but with the immediacy of my lived experience as a young Canadian woman. It had to do with living a new life in a new country, unencumbered by all the history and class hierarchy that represented England. It had to do with the increased wealth and status of our family now that my father was making a comfortable salary as a Canadian university professor. It had to do with living in a big place with lots of space to move around in. And it had to do with living in a place that I perceived as free and open, just waiting to be filled up with my dreams and desires, a

place in which my social position and opportunities did not seem to be predetermined (though of course they are).

If leaving England had meant losing one home and a childhood, it had also meant gaining a different home and a different future. But I know now that this promising future was only open to me because I was the most desirable kind of immigrant. Canada was waiting for me. I was a daughter of the Empire. My English passport opened the doors not only to the nation's borders but also to the nation's social formation. This was the subtext of my assimilation and the guarantee of my right of occupation. This right, of course, has historical roots. My arrival was facilitated by the wave of British immigrants who had preceded me in the nineteenth century. Because so many had come and stayed (especially in southern Ontario), they had determined the shape and the face of the dominant culture. Because they believed that the land was empty, waiting to be filled up with farms and towns and good solid folk, they had claimed their right to take the land, not seeing that it was already occupied. And because their claim on the land had been supported by the sophisticated and powerful machinery of British imperialism, they had held onto the land and begun the process of making history--narrating the story of themselves in a particular location at a particular time--in the "new world." My particular inheritance, then, was the certainty that I belonged in this new place. Even if it was no longer officially so, ideologically Canada was still "ours." And mine.

Introduction

Locating Subjects: Contemporary Canadian and Australian Autobiography

In one of the earliest comprehensive studies of autobiographical writing, *English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Forms*, Wayne Shumaker notes, almost in passing, that the classical writers of English autobiography represent themselves in a curiously placeless and disembodied world:

> Most autobiographers live in no houses, work in no rooms, sleep in no beds, see nothing of the streets through which they pass daily, are blind to the succession of seasons, never suffer from minor illnesses or irritations: live, in short, in a quite inhuman and impossible way. (40)

Shumaker goes on to explain this strange absence in terms of the difficulty of capturing in writing the sheer volume and complexity of the objects and environments associated with everyday human life, but he also suggests that the real business of autobiography is not the spatiality of human existence, but its history, the "salient events, actions, and traits" of the autobiographer lived out in sequence over time (Herbert Spencer, quoted in Shumaker 40). The binary between space and time that Shumaker implicitly sets up here, and the increased importance given to matters of time and history, have, until very recently, been symptomatic of autobiography criticism and theory. It is the purpose of this study to shift the focus. In what follows, I argue that the autobiographical "I" is always situated within very specific spatial contexts and that the particular relations between the autobiographical "I" and the significant places in which it is figured are an important constitutive feature of subjectivity. My project, then, is partly to redress the temporal bias of autobiography theory by marking the specificities of place in autobiographical writing. It is also to consider how ideas and meanings associated with particular places shape subjectivity. I am particularly interested in how the discourse of European imperialism informed the settler colonies of Canada and Australia and made

these places available as sites of identification or disidentification to the particular subjects who happen to be located there. I also suggest that thinking about subjectivity in spatial, as well as temporal terms, is an important step in the formulation of subjectivities in these locations that are genuinely decolonized.

This study does not break entirely new theoretical ground. Some critics of autobiography have been attentive to the importance of place in autobiographical writing, especially in terms of regional and ethnic identifications and especially in the American context.[1] It has been the influence of feminist and postcolonial criticism on autobiography studies, however, that has opened up the question of place in autobiographical writing, and I have taken my lead from these methodologies. Feminist and postcolonial critics have begun to think through what it means to speak and write from particular locations, and they have investigated how subjectivity itself might be a function of the discourses that shape those locations. An important insight is that the specific context from which the subject speaks and writes has both personal and political significance. An early articulation of this point can be found in Adrienne Rich's essay "Notes toward a Politics of Location" in which Rich attempts to take responsibility for her own speaking position as a Jewish American lesbian feminist woman, a speaking position that must account both for her marginalization because of her gender, ethnicity, and sexuality *and* for her centrality as a white middle-class citizen of an imperialist nation. It can also be found in Carolyn Kay Steedman's book, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, an intriguing blend of biography and criticism in which Steedman investigates how her mother's subjectivity was shaped not only by her gender and class but also by the spatial contexts (a Lancashire mill town and a working-class neighbourhood in South London) that her mother inhabited. Steedman's text opens with the realization that

> It matters then, whether one reshapes past time, re-uses the ordinary exigencies and crises of all childhoods whilst looking down from the

> curtainless windows of a terraced house like my mother did, or sees at that moment the long view stretching away from the big house in some richer and more detailed landscape. (5)

And she asserts that "[i]t is a proposition of this book that that specificity of place and politics has to be reckoned with in making an account of anybody's life, and their use of their own past" (6). The spatial references in Steedman's comments are thoroughly tied to England and the English class structure, but the implication--that place matters--is foundational to my own work. More recently, critics such as Françoise Lionnet in *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, Shirley Neuman in her essay "Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences," and many of the writers who contribute to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's timely collection *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, have begun to consider the particular problematics of subjectivity in colonial and postcolonial situations. In doing so, these critics begin with the premise that the particular geographic and cultural locations that autobiographical subjects inhabit make a difference. Such work heralds a welcome new direction in autobiography studies.

The title of this study is intended to suggest that autobiographical subjects must always be located within, and read in relation to, the specific geographical and cultural contexts they inhabit. Reading Canadian and Australian autobiographies means thinking about European imperialism and the processes of colonial settlement it set in motion in Antipodean and North American spaces. It is this history that renders the relations between places and subjects so acutely visible and so intriguingly problematic. The significant places represented in the primary texts I discuss, whether they be the most intimate place of the human body or larger spheres such as the home or the nation, are heavily inscribed by the discourse of imperialism. Implicit in the title, particularly in my use of the present participle "locating," is also the idea that the formulation of viable subjectivities in these places is still very much in process. One of my arguments

is that the persistent inability of Canadians or Australians to ever fully determine--or *settle*--fixed notions of "Canadian" or "Australian" identities in these locations is a good thing, for such an attempt represents an ongoing imperialist enterprise that is bound up with notions of ownership and control of space, natural resources, and people, an enterprise that has been played out in both locations by European settlers and their descendants over the past five hundred years, inevitably at the cost of aboriginal peoples.[2] Both Canada and Australia are places of contest and struggle where diverse peoples compete for social power and cultural legitimacy. To say "I" in these places, then, is to be involved in a politics of place.

I pluralize "subjects" in my title in order to emphasize the plurality of subjectivities formed in both Canada and Australia. I take for granted the fact that these nations are the homes of multiracial, multicultural, multilingual populations, and that there are a plethora of ways of formulating an "I" in them. It is not my purpose to determine which representations of Canadian or Australian subjectivities are most accurate or authentic; rather, it is my purpose to develop a method of reading Canadian and Australian autobiographies which would allow for heterogeneity and the local specificity of subjectivities. All subjects are informed by many different and competing discourses. To say this is to indicate that my use of the term "subject" is influenced by various critical theories, including poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial, which have each, in different ways and for different ends, challenged the traditional notion of the humanist "self" that has been hegemonic since the Enlightenment. That "self" was thought to be unique, coherent, and all-knowing, but, as various theorists have shown, the Enlightenment "self" was supported and validated by imperialist, bourgeois, and masculinist ideologies which not only excluded a good proportion of the world's population but actually oppressed them by denying them subjectivity. In chapters one and two, I consider in some detail the ways in which subjectivity is discursively-constituted, as well as the limits of the subject's ability to resist those discourses. In

other words, I discuss the possibility and parameters of agency. I also consider the particular role that autobiography has to play in not only representing subjectivity but also changing it.

I have attempted to be consistent in my use of terminology. When speaking generally, I assume that all "I's" in autobiographical writing are "subjects" that are neither coherent nor all-knowing but are, instead, constituted through the intersection of multiple overlapping discourses, all of which have specific histories, some of which can be resisted some of the time. I understand "subjectivity" as the network of discourses that intersect to produce a particular subject. If I use the word "self," it appears in quotation marks as a signal that this "self" is always under suspicion. Although the word "identity," because of its long history of usage in criticism, risks referring back to the old notion of the Enlightenment "self," I continue to use it in this study to refer specifically to subject positions that are greater than but available to a particular subject. It is possible, for instance, to think of "feminist identities" or "Canadian identities" which are based on ideologies that are collectively formulated and experienced. These identities, however, can be and frequently are taken up by individuals for both personal and political reasons. Indeed, I would argue that identities based on communal membership and collective action are vital politically, but that specific identities can be either internalized or resisted by subjects. Finally, rather than consistently using the pronoun "I" when referring to the autobiographical subjects represented in the specific autobiographies studied here, I refer to the "I" as the "narrator." In doing so I wish to highlight that the autobiographical subject is textually-constituted, that is, inscribed in a literary text. But, as I make clear in chapter one, this narrator also bears a direct relation to the author. In other words, I assume that the autobiographical "I" is not just a linguistic marker, a pronominal position, a signifier without a clear referent, but a person in the world for whom issues of place and subjectivity matter.

The Question of Place

> Without an adequate sense of place, it might be argued, individuals will be forever deracinated. The quest for a sense of place, of belonging, may indeed comprise an important strategy for psychological survival . . . .
>
> Bruce Bennett
> "Place, Region, and Community: An Introduction" (21)

In various disciplines over the past couple of decades, there has been increasing critical interest paid to concepts of space and place and their relation to human life. Why this should be so is not entirely clear, but there is some force to the argument that subjectivities are less easily fixable in terms of time and space in a postmodern age in which multinational corporate capitalism, sophisticated communications and transportation networks, and broad-scale human migrations collapse spatial and temporal boundaries.[3] It is also probably true that European imperialism altered many maps, and that since the decline of the age of Empire, many of the world's people have been busy trying to reconfigure those maps. The emergence of newly-independent postcolonial nations did not necessarily produce secure and stable subjectivities grounded in clearly-defined and autonomous geographical and cultural spaces. On the contrary, one of the legacies of imperialism is a certain anxiety often translated into a need to articulate site-specific identities through intellectual and creative acts. How this anxiety is taken up as a project of autobiography is one of the primary concerns of this study.

Place? Space? Location? Along with this new interest in the spatial contexts in which human life is lived has come a plethora of terminology that is often confusingly and inconsistently employed. Both subjects and the social relations among them are now spoken of as functions of space, place, geography, location, situation, landscape,

position, context, environment, mappings, and cartographies. This messiness and confusion of critical terminology is partly the result of the cross-fertilization that happens when one discipline borrows and adapts ideas from another. In this respect, the discipline of geography has been most fruitful in making available a provocative and suggestive lexicon, although geography itself has been significantly influenced by theoretical discourses such as Marxism and feminism, as well as particular social theorists, especially Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault.[4] This confusion of critical terminology, however, is suggestive of a larger problem: there is no readily available critical language that would allow us to articulate precisely how subjectivity is shaped by the fact of our living in worlds that are constituted in both time *and* space. Indeed, if at certain moments I struggle to specify exactly what I mean it is because this entire project has been about my attempt to find a language that would allow us to talk about subjectivity in spatial terms.

It seems to me that there might be a certain value in keeping this terminology on shifting ground. The messiness, I want to suggest, is actually rather useful, for it necessitates being able to conceive of space and place both in terms of concrete "reality" (physical, material existence and geographic location) and in terms of abstract metaphor (as discursive site and subject position). The demarcation between these two ways of thinking about space is not clear because, as Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space*, space is always social and society is always spatial. What we perceive as "place," for instance, is only partly physical, concrete, and mappable; it is also coded by culturally-determined ideologies that make place meaningful. Of course we all exist in physical environments, but those environments cannot be accessed directly or experienced naturally, for environments are inscribed and shaped by culture. In other words, places are always mediated. Nevertheless, to conceive of the subject's relation to place as being only determined and constrained by ideologies is to undervalue not only the affective dimensions of specific subjects' relations to significant places but also to

deny the political efficacy of thinking about subjectivity in terms of what G. Pratt has termed "limited stasis" (244), in terms, that is, of dwelling. Autobiographers, it seems to me, only write about places because they are meaningful, because they are loaded with emotional and symbolic significance, because they are or have been *lived.* Although it is necessary to denaturalize representations of places in order to uncover the ideologies that inform them, it is also necessary to consider what function these places serve in the production of the autobiographical "I." It is necessary, in a word, to consider not only how they mean but why they matter.

Having argued for the usefulness of messy terminology, however, I want to explain why I use the word "place" most often in this study. The concept of "place" has an appealing malleability. It allows me to talk about autobiographical subjectivity as at once located within specific environments and embedded within sets of relationships. The signifier "place" can refer to any kind of spatial arrangement in relation to which subjectivity is shaped and experienced. It can refer, then, to concrete physical structures and sites, such as the body, a room, or a house, as well as to more abstract and imaginary sites such as cities and nations. In chapter two, for instance, I consider the mutual imbrication of places on bodies and bodies on places and argue that subjectivity is partly constituted through the intersection of the physical and the psychic. Furthermore, the term "place" carries with it certain connotative values that are important in autobiographical writing. One speaks of significant places (whether positive or negative), and in literary texts, it is the feelings and meanings writers associate with places that matter most. This is particularly evident in autobiographical representations of childhood homes, as I consider in chapter three. The term "place," however, can also refer to one's position within the social order, and by this I mean that although subjectivity is constituted within specific concrete locations, it is also constituted in relation to many other discourses. Further, those locations are themselves shaped by discourses. Informing every chapter of this study is the argument that

discourses of class, gender, race, and ethnicity position or place subjects within Australian and Canadian social formations in very particular ways. Autobiographical subjects, then, are thoroughly *emplaced*.

But places are not neutral, natural, empty, or self-evident. They are not just *there*. Rather, places are coded by culture, and their meanings are made by people. As such, the same place can have various meanings, signifying differently to different occupants. Further, the meanings of particular places can change over time, and new meanings, often the result of one interest group imposing its own particular ideological structures on a given environment, can gain legitimacy. That is, the ways in which places are known or made available to subjects is partly a function of power relations. These might be rather obvious points, but it is worth emphasizing, I think, that a particular place can be inhabited by people differently (and can, therefore, be disputed), and that place is not only physical but also *psychic* territory in which people invest themselves both personally and politically. If we understand place as a social construct, then, it becomes possible to read and decode places. Places are hierarchized, divided along lines of race and ethnicity.[5] They are gendered, some considered more appropriate to women, some to men.[6] They can be apportioned along generational or class lines. They can contain certain kinds of people and exclude others. They are sacred or secular, safe or unsafe, permitted or taboo. The various features of a particular place (size, shape, orientation), the arrangement and division of place, the position of and relationship between objects in a place, the relative importance of one place in relation to another--these are determined by cultural factors. The cultural meanings associated with places, in turn, determine how people perceive it, their attitudes towards it, and how they live in it.

The house that was my grandparents' home is a "two up and two down" terrace house at 85 Wansford Road, Driffield, Yorkshire. It lies snuggled neatly in a row of

identical dwellings that runs the whole street long. From the street, these terrace houses appear to be all one long red brick building, but the different curtains on the front windows and the different colours of the front doors (number 85 is a green the colour of the mushy boiled peas we used to buy from fish and chip shops) mark their separation. At the back, each house has its own slab of concrete backyard contained by a brick wall and a small patch of garden across the back alley. Inside the house is very small. All of the furniture and objects in it--and even the people--seem too big. The middle room, where all of the action of living takes place, contains a large wooden table, four chairs with lumpy leather seats, a heavy sideboard, a sofa, and a (rented) television set. When we all sit down to eat at the table, there isn't enough space to walk around the room.

The front room is off limits. To everyone, not just children. I remember being allowed in there only a few times to look at the photographs and ornaments that sit on shelves and walls, or to listen to my older cousin's Beatles records on the record player. No one ever actually lives in the front room. That isn't what it's for. It isn't usable space. When the whole family is there, at Christmas time for instance, we all crowd into the middle room (did this room have a name? was this the living room?) and leave the front room for some other, imagined purpose. It is hallowed ground, not to be disturbed. The room is special not so much for what it contains, but because of its location at the front of the house. It is the room you would step into if you were to ever come in through the front door (which I never have). It is the room that is meant to impress. It is a place of respect--to be respected in itself and to be open only to those to whom one owes respect. Important people, then, not family or friends. A working class version of a parlour, the front room is a tiny space with immense symbolic value. It shows that even if you are desperately poor and have numerous children (my grandparents had four) you can still afford to set aside a room for special occasions and special people. And it shows that you know enough to realize that the appearance

of gentility and propriety is important even if everyone knows that you are not gentlefolk. The front room is always tidy and presentable, but cold.

Language doesn't simply describe places or express what is already there; rather language makes places meaningful and available for human occupation. Human beings associate particular words with particular places, and through that process of naming and inscribing, places become comprehensible as sites of identification. Vincent Berdoulay argues that it is because places are represented through linguistic processes that they become social:

> Metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc., all serve the purpose of conceptualizing place and its meaning. These discourses express people's relation to their representations of the environment and society. The discourse on place is underlined by a discourse on social issues. They share a similar finality.
>
> In other words, a place comes explicitly into being in the discourse of its inhabitants, and particularly in the rhetoric it promotes. (135)

To suggest that there are rhetorics of places is also to suggest that there is a relationship between place and the processes of subject formation, for, as theorists such as Jacques Lacan have argued, we become subjects through processes of language. As I discuss in some detail in chapter two, the Lacanian model of subject formation posits that subjectivity is partly produced through the subject's awareness of itself as a physical body, an object with a spatial dimension that exists in a spatial context and in relation to other objects. In regulating that spatial context through language, subjects come into being. To say, as I do, that subjectivity is a function of place is not to refer to some natural, environmental determinism, then; instead, it is to say that discourses of place (in negotiation with a range of other discourses) constitute the subject.

In *The Road to Botany Bay: Explorations of Landscape and History*, Paul Carter develops the concept of "spatial history" to elucidate how subjectivities in particular geographic locations at particular moments in history are formulated. Carter is concerned with how the cultural construct that is understood to represent "Australia" was produced through language, through the inscriptions of place he traces in various kinds of literary texts from the colonial period--maps, explorers' journals, letters written by settlers, and so on. Carter argues that the writing of these texts actually brought the place into being, gave Australia a reality that it didn't have before, named a place and carved out a territory that could then be inhabited. Central to Carter's argument is the idea that raw, abstract, unknown space is transformed into knowable, confinable, and thus, inhabitable place through language:

> For by the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history. And, by the same token, the namer inscribes his passage permanently on the world, making a metaphorical word-place which others may one day inhabit and by which, in the meantime, he asserts his own place in history. (xxiv)

Carter's primary materials are nineteenth-century colonial Australian texts; mine are contemporary Canadian and Australian autobiographies; nevertheless, Carter's concept of "spatial history" is important to this study, for autobiography is nothing if not the articulation of one's own "place in history." What Carter's notion of "spatial history" also emphasizes, and a point upon which I draw in my critical readings, is that the contemporary autobiographical subject does not, Adam-like, name her or his own world; rather the subject exists in a geographic, historical, and cultural context that has been constructed through the language of others who have gone before. We inherit a geography just as we inherit a history. Autobiographical subjectivity might be understood, then, as the performance of personal representations of place in conjunction

with or in opposition to normative representations of place that already circulate in culture.

It has long been a commonplace of both Canadian and Australian literary criticism, as well as certain varieties of postcolonial criticism, to suggest that literary writing emerging from such locations creates a distinctive "sense of place."[7] Although critics of Canadian and Australian autobiography also frequently promote this idea, it is not my purpose to read autobiographical writing strictly in these terms. This study is not about places themselves but about how ideas and languages associated with places produce autobiographical subjects. Certainly this approach necessitates taking into account representations of place--one might call them myths--that have become normalized within the specific contexts of Australian or Canadian culture, but in my critical readings I aim to trouble and denaturalize representations of places in order to tease out the specificities of different subjects' *particular* relations to *particular* places.

Postcolonial Places and Subjects

As Edward W. Said put it, "we would not have had empire itself, as well as many forms of historiography, anthropology, sociology, and modern legal structures, without important philosophical and imaginative processes at work in the production as well as the acquisition, subordination, and settlement of space" ("Representing" 218). These "philosophical and imaginative processes" are part of the inheritance of postcolonial subjects. While the relationship between subjects and places is always a complex one, perhaps nowhere is the ambivalent and unstable positioning of subjects more apparent than in postcolonial autobiographies where the instability and fracture of subjectivity is frequently both a thematic focus and a linguistic tension. For postcolonial subjects, there is no way of occupying the home place that does not involve acknowledging a history of domination by a foreign power. Colonization means the conquering of physical, cultural, and psychic territory. Indeed, the forgetting or

devaluing of site-specific detail and experience is one of the markers of successful colonization, where the ideologies of the colonial oppressor succeed in suppressing--or even eradicating--local, indigenous knowledges. In this sense, and in ways that will be explored in some detail throughout this study, postcolonial locations are both home and not-home to their peoples. But postcolonial writing does not simply lament the loss of home; it is also vitally concerned with the ways in which colonial invasion has been and continues to be resisted through the articulation of local, culturally-situated knowledges and practices.

Postcolonial autobiographers--that is, autobiographers whose work can be located within a broad cultural politics that seeks to counter and resist imperialist ideology--are generally quite conscious of their *location,* that is, their mappable, geographic position, the situation of their homelands in relation both to the former imperial "parent" nations and to existing world power systems, as well as their position in relation to certain regional or community divisions. While there are many and diverse ways in which a subject occupies specific places, my argument is that those whose homes have been conceptualized as marginal, dependent, peripheral, can never forget or ignore exactly how they are positioned by imperialist power structures. Knowing that their lives can never be read as universal and, thus, place-less, postcolonial autobiographers often articulate the precise conditions and features of their physical and social environments, and they do so because those environments have been represented in very particular ways and with specific results in imperial literary texts, and there is a need to come to terms with how their subjectivities have been shaped by those representations. Australian autobiographer David Malouf, for instance, speaks of having to negotiate between his English mother's determined efforts to maintain the values and standards of "Home" (i.e. England) and the natural environment in which he lived. "Forbidden to use local slang, or to speak or act 'Australian', we grew up as in a foreign land, where everything local, everything outside the house that was closest and

most ordinary, had about it the glow of the exotic" (*12 Edmonstone Street* 33). As Gillian Whitlock comments in a review essay of Australian autobiography, autobiographical writing is a particularly rich field for postcolonial criticism: "the tendency to use the architecture of the house as a metaphor of the self, the sense of uncertain self produced by conflicting loyalties to European and Australian cultural models, the preoccupation with place and identity. These are all issues which are central to post-colonial readings of the distinctiveness of writing in settler cultures, ways in which the margin writes back to the centre as it were" ("Recent" 263).

The self-conscious contextualization of the subject in postcolonial autobiography can also be read as a response to a dominant Anglo-European tradition of autobiographical writing in which the autobiographer's context has been generally received as *known territory*. The lives of canonical autobiographers such as Saint Augustine, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, William Wordsworth, Benjamin Franklin, and Henry Adams have been, at various moments, read as exemplary, sometimes universal. While a European or American autobiographer will certainly also talk about the place in which he was born and document his subsequent travels through space and time, these details are generally read in terms of setting and function primarily to establish the authenticity of the narrative. When a postcolonial autobiographer--in this case, the Canadian Métis writer Maria Campbell--begins the first chapter of her autobiography in this way, on the other hand, something else is going on:

> In the 1860's Saskatchewan was part of what was then called the Northwest Territories and was a land free of towns, barbed-wire fences and farm-houses. The Halfbreeds came here from Ontario and Manitoba to escape the prejudice and hate that comes with the opening of a new land. (*Halfbreed* 3)

This autobiographer specifically positions herself in relation to a complex and lengthy history of settlement and appropriation of land and resources in a country that has been

perceived as ripe for "opening" and plundering. She describes the particular ways in which nineteenth-century settlers saw and used the land ("towns, barbed-wire fences and farm-houses") and implies that settlement was an imposition on a land that had been "free." She locates her own story even more particularly in a certain region of Canada--a region whose borders have themselves shifted over time and in response to political and economic forces. And she identifies herself with a minority group, the Métis, who had been forced to move both because of the racial prejudice of new European settlers and because, unlike Native tribes, they had no traditional land base that could be negotiated via treaty. This overt contextualization of the life narrative, then, this *emplacement* of the autobiographical subject, functions as more than a way of establishing setting. Positioning her own life narrative in relation to a specific place, time, and history in this way is a political gesture that functions to locate the autobiographer in a context of ongoing personal and political struggles over issues of national identity, cultural legitimacy, social power, and land. An autobiography such as Campbell's *Halfbreed* begins with the notion that place is contested.

Second World Places

But who exactly qualifies as a postcolonial subject? Does the common experience of colonial domination render all postcolonials the same, or does the discourse of postcolonialism that is currently alive and potent in academic institutions tend to elide differences among subjects and pursue an essence of authentic postcoloniality?[8] Obviously, not all experiences of colonialism were--or are--the same; thus, the register of the term "postcolonial" differs from location to location. The former colonies of Canada and Australia are particularly problematic locations in which to speak of postcolonial subjects. Canada and Australia are settler colonies where Europeans occupied land, dispossessed and overwhelmed aboriginal peoples, and imposed a transplanted European culture.[9] These are places where the dissemination of

imperialist ideology and activity was accomplished through the immigration and permanent settlement of free--or, in the case of Australia, often convict--European immigrants, primarily from England, Ireland, Scotland, and, in Canada, France. The resulting predominantly white settler societies are ambivalently positioned in terms of imperial relations, for while they were colonized by Britain and subject to its rule, they were also themselves colonizers of the aboriginal peoples who had lived in these places for thousands of years. Moreover, in both Canada and Australia, an implicitly colonial relation between the dominant white society and aboriginal peoples--what has been termed "internal colonialism"--carries into the contemporary moment.

Canada and Australia represent a particular kind of postcolonial place. Alan Lawson has named this place the "second world," and my use of the term in this study follows his. The term is somewhat problematic, partly because of the confusion of this second world with the one understood by political geographers to represent the nations that made up the former communist East Bloc, and partly because of the evolutionary hierarchy implicit in a conceptual system that seems to rank regions of the globe or diasporic communities by number.[10] Nevertheless, Lawson's formulation is useful in that it points to the doubled and in-between nature of these cultural locations. Lawson describes texts produced from such locations in this way:

> The colonial/post-colonial text, as I see it, speaks from an inevitable position of ambi/valence, knowing its otherness but licensed to speak by a tradition which makes it other. The inherent awareness of both "there" and "here," and the cultural ambiguity of these terms, are not so much the boundaries of its cultural matrix, nor tensions to be resolved, but a space *within* which it may move *while* speaking. (69)

Second world postcolonial literary texts are, then, uniquely positioned to simultaneously critique the dominant traditions that are their cultural inheritance--including, I want to suggest, the tradition of canonical European autobiography--and to question their own

authority, their own resistance to those hegemonic forms. As Stephen Slemon clarifies, the term second world refers to the "dynamic *relation* between those 'apparently antagonistic, static, aggressive, [and] disjunctive' binaries which colonialism 'settles' upon a landscape, binaries such as colonizer and colonized, foreign and native, settler and indigene, home and away" ("Unsettling" 38). To find oneself in this second world means to find oneself in a position from which the ambivalence of colonial relations and one's own complicity with colonial authority can be recognized. In the autobiographical texts of non-aboriginal writers studied here, occupying that second world place, and reading one's own life from within its parameters, means experiencing the ground shift under one's feet. As I discuss in detail in chapter three, Jill Ker Conway is perhaps the most explicit in naming this situational unease. Ker Conway reflects on the history of settlement of New South Wales and the development of pastoral farming in which her own family participated, but, at the same time, she documents her nascent awareness that the land on which her ancestors sank their roots is stolen land. In the nardoo stones that were once treasured baking stones used by Aboriginal peoples and that now serve as the front step of the familial home, Ker Conway locates a trace of an erased aboriginal presence.[11] What, then, does place mean in the formulation of white settler subjectivities when individuals cannot claim an ancestral connection to the land? And what does place mean to aboriginal peoples whose history records displacement and dispossession as significant events? Or, to ask these questions another way, how can the signifiers "Canada" and "Australia" mean in the contemporary moment to the many diverse peoples who inhabit these locations?

A comparative analysis of contemporary Canadian and Australian autobiographies permits me to engage with these questions.[12] First, Canada and Australia frame a field of critical inquiry in which the vexed issues of home, origin, belonging, and authenticity--all issues that speak to the ways in which people experience their relationships to particular places--can be productively explored. These are issues

that have specific ideological histories and serve significant symbolic functions for the people of diverse cultural backgrounds who make up the populations of these nations. Certainly, questions of identity in both Canada and Australia are far from resolved; indeed, one might consider the identity question an obsession. Second, by looking at autobiographical writing that emerges from two second world nations I am able to consider how the discourse of imperialism, as it was specifically deployed in settler colonies, shapes particular ideas of place. And finally, a comparative approach demands attention to local social realities, local concerns, and local meanings. Although Canadians and Australians share partly similar histories and some common concerns, the six autobiographers I consider in this study are all very specifically positioned in relation to the ideologies of place that shape both their most personal environments and the larger national and cultural spheres.

In order to emphasize the central fact that territory in these second world locations is contested, I have chosen to analyze autobiographical texts that can be roughly categorized as either aboriginal or non-aboriginal. I emphasize, however, the heterogeneity of those identificatory categories and how individual subjects do not necessarily find easy accommodation within them. The "white" settler subjectivities represented in David Malouf's *12 Edmonstone Street*, Gabrielle Roy's *Enchantment and Sorrow*, and Jill Ker Conway's *The Road From Coorain*, for instance, are each themselves destabilized by differences of ethnicity, language, and gender. In my readings, I consider how various discourses intersect to produce a particular subject in relation to a particular point in time and space, and how the effects of multiple discourses can work to either empower or constrain the subject, sometimes simultaneously. Similarly, the autobiographies written by aboriginal peoples that I discuss here are complex, multi-faceted texts in which subjectivity is neither fixed nor stable. While Jane Willis's *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* documents and critiques how Canadian imperialism disrupts her traditional Native life and identity, it also

demonstrates the limits and parameters of agency. Sally Morgan's *My Place* and Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*, which I discuss in the fourth chapter, are autobiographies of hybrid subjects that not only speak to the situation of aboriginal peoples in contemporary Australia and Canada, but also speak to the possibilities of fostering non-oppressive relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples. To some extent, each of the autobiographies is contestatory and counter-discursive. They resist the dominant ideologies that shape the social spaces of Canada and Australia, and, thus, can be considered postcolonial texts. However, each forms only a part of the huge and difficult political project of decolonization. It is one of the purposes of this study to consider the specific role of autobiographical writing in that political struggle.

Locating Myself

Canadian and Australian subjectivities, I want to emphasize, are unstable, internally fractured, constantly needing to be renegotiated and resecured. Indeed, my own Canadianness must be kept constantly under review, for, in representing myself as a Canadian, I risk forgetting about the history of colonization and dispossession, of theft and genocide, that made it possible for me to occupy this land in the first place. I also risk forgetting that those who do not fit the profile of the preferred Canadian citizen--both immigrants of other races and ethnic backgrounds as well as aboriginal peoples who have been here all along--do not share my experience of Canada. Nor, of course, do second, third, and fourth generation European Canadians who have been thoroughly assimilated into the dominant settler society. My relative newness to this land, as well as my memories of a significant elsewhere, have perhaps made me particularly aware of the unnaturalness of concepts such as belonging. There is nothing like the experience of emigration to unsettle your understanding of who you are.

Obviously I have a personal investment in this project, for it has helped me to explore my own relation to and position within the place called "Canada," as well as the ideologies that were shaped in and by my original home and which I carried with me to this new place. The fragments of my own autobiographical writing that punctuate this study reflect the process of personal review this research project has initiated in me. But they also function, I hope, in other ways: first as a means of exploring theoretical points by linking theory with the history and texture of my own life; and second as a disruption of the formal and apparently neutral and authoritative language that scholarly writing generally pretends to be. It is not my intention to hide my investments in this project, but to announce them. Nicole Ward Jouve makes an important point when she notes that literary criticism is *also* autobiography, for what literary critics choose to write about and how they choose to shape that writing reveals something about the critic. While this is generally true for all critics, it might be especially true of critics of autobiography. Sidonie Smith speculates that "those of us who work very long with autobiographical writing begin to think autobiographically, to yearn to break away from standard critical prose in order to move gradually to autobiographically grounded analysis" ("The [Female] Subject" 126). This is not just self-indulgence. Rather, it is the result of becoming aware of how knowledge of the "self" is contingent upon historical, political, and geographical conditions. Sometimes in this writing what I am trying to articulate is where I think my knowledge comes from; sometimes I consider the limits of my knowledge.[13]

I am conscious of my own experience of integrating smoothly into mainstream settler Canadian society, but I do not write this out of a desire to expiate any personal sense of guilt. My purpose is to make visible those forces that shape the production of subjects located in either Canada or Australia, but I do not want to do so as a way of simply castigating contemporary non-aboriginal subjects for their crimes or those of their ancestors. Although I argue that the past cannot--and must not--be forgotten, I

believe that one of the tasks of writing--including critical writing--is to imagine a different future. If academic work is to have any relevance to the world outside of the academy, surely that relevance is to be found in articulating different and better ways of being in the world. To this end, I close this study by proposing an alternative model of subjectivity, one that I think is appropriate to second world locations, based on the spatial configuration of the multicultural neighbourhood. Such a model is able both to allow for cultural differences between inhabitants of a particular place and to imagine productive, non-oppressive relationships among them. The vexed issues of identity and authenticity, of origin and occupation, of land claims and self-government that circulate in both social spaces make it clear that no single interpretation or definition of "Canadianness" or "Australianness" will ever be sufficient. However, this does not mean that the viability of all such identificatory categories need be rejected altogether. Rather, they need to be reimagined as flexible, open, negotiable, contingent. I argue for the necessity of locating subjects within the cultural politics of colonial relations in Canada and Australia, but I also argue for the necessity of thinking beyond separatist politics and towards imagining ways in which many diverse peoples (for it is not simply a matter of "white" or "European" versus "aboriginal") can share and cohabit within these spaces. In this sense, I endorse a statement made by Labumore (Elsie Roughsey), a Lardil Aboriginal woman who writes her own autobiography partly as an argument for a decolonized Australia. Labumore writes of her hope that in the future, Australian subjectivity can be conceived of as "mixed background and forward step together and make it one, and live as one real people for the days that are to come" (2). This study makes a similar gesture towards a positive future.

Notes

[1] The collection of essays edited by Bill J. Berry, *Located Lives: Place and Idea in Southern Autobiography*, is an important contribution to the critical work on regional autobiography. See also essays by Susanna Egan and William Boelhower in *American Autobiography,* edited by Paul John Eakin. Two recent essays on ethnic American women's autobiography by Betty Bergland and Kirsten Wasson are focused on the function of places--both within the "old world" and the "new world"--in the constitution of immigrant American subjectivity. Significantly, Bergland argues for "chronotopic" readings of ethnic autobiography--readings, that is, that are conscious of both the time and the place of the subject.

[2] I use the term "aboriginal" (lowercase "a") to refer generally to the indigenous peoples who continue to live as colonized minorities within predominantly white European settler societies. I use the term "Aboriginal" (uppercase "A") to refer to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. In the Canadian context, there is no readily agreed upon term to designate aboriginal peoples of various ancestral backgrounds. When discussing individual texts, I have generally followed the direction of the autobiographers themselves. Thus, in chapter two I use the term "Indian" because this is how Jane Willis identifies herself, and in chapter four I use "Native" because this is the term favoured by Lee Maracle. The changing meanings and values associated with different terms indicate shifts within political movements over time.

[3] Edward Soja, in his *Postmodern Geographies,* as well as many of the writers of essays collected in two recent books, *Place and the Politics of Identity*, edited by Michael Keith and Steve Pile, and *Mapping the Futures,* edited by Jon Bird et al, consider the intellectual shifts that have brought the issues of space and place into the realm of contemporary social theory and critical thought.

[4] The idea that place and human subjectivity are mutually imbricated is central to phenomenological geography, typified by the works of Yi-Fu Tuan and E. Relph. For geographic studies of the relations between place and subjectivity that are influenced by Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist theories, see John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan, David Harvey, Michael Keith and Steve Pile, Gillian Rose, and Edward Soja.

[5] In his work on ethnic autobiography in the United States, for instance, William Boelhower considers the creation of "other" geographic spaces within American cities--Little Italy, Chinatown, black ghettos--which unsettle unitary images of the nation.

[6] In particular, feminist architects, urban planners, and sociologists have investigated the gendering of space in the design and construction of built environments. Two books by feminist sociologists that deal with how spaces are divided and arranged with respect to gender in different cultures are Shirley Ardener's *Women and Space* and Daphne Spain's *Gendered Spaces*. Marion Roberts, in *Living in a Man-Made World*, considers gender issues in British housing design.

[7] For an insightful analysis of this trend in Canadian literary criticism see Leon Surette. The wider resonances of this concept are discussed in chapter three.

[8] Arun P. Mukherjee argues that postcolonialism as a theoretical field produces a totalized, essentialized subject. See her essays "The Exclusions of Postcolonial Theory and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*: A Case Study" and "Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Postmodernism?" Linda Hutcheon, in "'Circling the Downspout of Empire': Post-Colonialism and Postmodernism," also points out that the issue of who constitutes a postcolonial subject is particularly problematic in Canada (155-57).

[9] This formulation follows Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*.

[10] In general terms, political geographers represent the "core" nations of (capitalist) western Europe and North America as the "first world," the former

(communist) East Bloc as the "second world," and all other "peripheral" and "developing" nations as the "third world." The terms "first world" and "third world" are in common usage in both academic and popular discourses, and within these terms of reference, both Australia and Canada are "first world" nations. In a move to unite diverse peoples and consolidate political power bases through common identification, two new "worlds" have recently been formulated. These are the "fourth world" of aboriginal peoples of the Americas and the "fifth world" of dispersed post-war immigrant peoples. On the latter, see Kateryna O. Longley's essay "Fifth World."

[11] In the essay "The Moment of Discovery of America Continues," published in *The Lovely Treachery of Words,* and also in his "Stone Hammer Poem," Robert Kroetsch records locating similar traces of a suppressed Native culture in western Canada. For a recent meditation on how white Canadians might understand and come to terms with this forgotten aboriginal presence see Sharon Butala's autobiography, *The Perfection of the Morning.*

[12] There is a long tradition of comparative analyses of "Commonwealth" or "Postcolonial" literatures, especially second world literatures. Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin's *Decolonising Fictions* is a recent example. Other important works include John Matthews's germinal study, *Tradition in Exile: A Comparative Study of Social Influences on the Development of Canadian and Australian Poetry in the Nineteenth Century*, Russell MacDougall and Gillian Whitlock's *Australian/Canadian Literatures in English: Comparative Perspectives*, Terry Goldie's *Fear and Temptation: Images of Indigenous Peoples in Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand Literatures*, and two books by W.H. New, *Among Worlds: An Introduction to Modern Commonwealth and South African Fiction* and *Dreams of Speech and Violence: The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand.*

[13] Three books in particular have shown me that such personal/critical writing is not only possible but desirable. In this study, my models have been Carolyn Kay Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* and Patricia J. Williams' *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. Drusilla Modjeska's *Poppy* is an extraordinary and compelling combination of biography, autobiography, fiction, and criticism which will perhaps provide a model for my next book.

Chapter One

The Autobiographical Subject in Theory

There is a photograph on the wall of the study in which I write that has long been my favourite. It is a black and white family snapshot that I spirited away one day from the jumble of old photographs my parents keep in yellowing envelopes in a sideboard cupboard. It shows a little girl sitting on the lap of an older man. The man is my maternal grandfather, my Opa. The little girl is me, age four. I look very happy, kneeling on Opa's lap, held in a close embrace, laughing into the camera's face. I also look very pretty. My hair (which I know is golden because my father keeps some of it in an old tobacco tin) is beribboned and pulled back off my face; my dress is flowered; my white cardigan, knitted by my mother, is neat and feminine. I wear a string of beads around my neck. My pearls.

I used to think that I am so intrigued by this particular photograph because the love Opa and I have for each other is so obvious in the expression the camera has caught. But now I admit that my feelings about this picture are really quite ambiguous. It worries me, disturbs me even, because I don't actually recognize myself in this image. I can detect a familiar shape to the mouth and eyebrows, the birthmark on my neck is there, and I remember (vaguely) the dress I am wearing, but this collection of evidence does not absolutely convince me that the little girl pictured here is me. It's not just that her body is unrecognizable (that golden hair faded and darkened long ago, the baby teeth gone, the knees grown fat), but I also can't acknowledge the gesture, the attitude, the spirit as mine. Nothing about that little girl corresponds to who I think I am. The photograph is a true representation of me (there is empirical evidence as well as corroborative testimony from family members that proves its authenticity), but it is also not a true representation of me. I never looked like that. I never was her.

The problem I articulate here is the problem of autobiographical reference: what is the relation between a representation of me and my subjectivity? Although photography and writing do not represent a life in the same way, they are both media through which the artist or writer attempts to understand the reality of her or his own existence. Never complete, always fragmentary, always framed in particular ways, a literary text, like a photograph, does not imitate a life. But a text can represent a life in such a way that it has epistemological status. It marks a certain knowledge of the "I" (Paul Smith 100). And yet the representation is also always problematic. The "I" of autobiography both is and is not the "I" as I experience myself to be both now and in the past. It cannot fix the contents and form of my subjectivity in any accurate or stable way. Moreover, that other "I" who was me in the past--that little girl I no longer recognize--will always remain elusive, for I can never reclaim that former time, that former body, that former place. But if I admit that the "I" is always shifting and partial, that it can never add up to truly represent my life and my physical and social being, is that all there is to say? Or can I believe in the "I" as the only way to mark my presence in the world, the "I" as the sign of my existence? Under what terms and conditions can we talk about the figurative "I" in autobiography as being both different from the world and intimately part of it? Moreover, what status might "the world" have in such discussions?

I know that in the photograph I am four years old, but my mother had to tell me so, and I had to compare that image of me with others taken at the same time. I do not remember what it was like to be four. I have no general memory of how my four-year-old body felt, what it could and could not do, or what I thought about at that age, what filled my mind and my imagination. But I do remember--absolutely remember--where the photograph was taken. I remember the exact colour and smell of the red brick wall behind me that is the space between the kitchen and the living room. This is the wall

against which I threw a tennis ball in countless hours of solitary play. There is the metal plate that I had to avoid hitting or else the ball would fly off in unpredictable directions. There is the window that risks being broken. There are my mother's plants on the window sill that might be knocked over. My grandfather and I are sitting on a low terrace wall whose height, width, and texture I know intimately. It is grey, rough, and always cold. It scratches my bare legs. It is the wall we climb over to visit the neighbours, which is what my mother was doing when she caught her leg and fell, causing a back injury that gives her pain to this day. That wall is written onto my mother's body differently than it is written onto mine.

I can read a history of my childhood--limited to be sure--in the images of place evoked by this photograph. I remember not only the details of the place but also how that place contained and shaped my early life. It was my house, my wall, my window. It was my home. And it was also me, for everything I knew about myself and about the world was learned in that place. This is what I left behind when I left England and what I most desperately wanted to find again when I made the trip back nine years later. That was a trip made both out of nostalgia and out of a desire to more fully know myself. What have I inherited from this place, I wonder? What kinds of knowledges did it produce in me?

Memory has both a temporal and a spatial content. It is not just that to visit (imaginatively or literally) certain places evokes memories of an earlier time, but that the places themselves speak to us and of us. Places are intimately connected with our physical and mental lives. They mark us, shape our perception of and access to the world beyond our own bodies. The red brick of my house locates me in a certain country in a certain era and in a certain class. The fact that we had to climb a terrace wall to reach our neighbours' house speaks of the social status that is encoded in the separateness of detached houses in an English village. We never heard our neighbours

through the walls of our house. We rarely even saw them. The garden beyond my terrace wall was long and wide, and it contained our very own playground: a sandbox, a swing, a club house at the bottom of the garden (which smelled of dirt and rotting potatoes), fruit trees to climb. Our house was bookended by rows of tall poplars front and back, screening us from the street and from other people, giving us privacy. My father has since pointed out to me that in England you can tell people's social status by how far their front doors are from the street. He should know, since he was born in a terrace house in a Yorkshire working-class district where the only separation from the street was the thickness of the door itself. My father's job as a university professor was what permitted us so much space. Because we had jumped a class, we could now take up more room in the world.

The images associated with this photograph also suggest my gendered socialization. There was no question in the late 1950's that girls played with dolls or crayons or soft tennis balls (I threw my ball underhand). I played quietly and close to home, whereas my brother was probably off playing noisy, competitive games with his friends. Cricket, Rounders, Cowboys and Indians, games where you had to be on a side and where you either won or lost, games where you risked getting dirty or getting hurt. I was learning to care about different things, and my world had different borders. But places are also mapped according to my private topography. The red brick wall that figures so large in my memory represents my particular experience of childhood isolation and loneliness. That wall was my most constant playmate and confidante. I spent hours playing with it. The colour of the brick, that lovely warm red, says security to me. I miss it in the stucco and siding land of the Alberta I now inhabit, and it is what my eyes hungrily gobble up when I am in Toronto or Guelph or any other Canadian city that modeled its early buildings on English styles and materials, transporting familiar images of home across the ocean. Red brick walls have a history that is both about me

and that exceeds me. But a particular red brick wall is embedded in my memory and in my understanding of who I am.

Autobiographers know how intimately place and subjectivity are related. But how ideas and meanings associated with particular places might be constitutive features of subjectivity has not, until very recently, been a serious concern of autobiography criticism. Instead, criticism of autobiography has tended to focus on two theoretical problems: temporality--how can the past be represented?--and reference--what is the precise relation between a representation of a life in language and the life itself? Both of these urgent and difficult issues are crucial to my own study, but I argue that the persistent focus of theory on these issues has tended to elide another important factor in the processes of subject formation: how subjects are shaped by the fact of living in a spatially-organized world.

The relationship between memory and the material and spatial contexts in which human beings exist is a relatively unexplored area of social theory, as Paul Connerton notes in his book *How Societies Remember*. Connerton argues that

> We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material mileu that surrounds us. It is to our social spaces--those which we occupy, which we frequently retrace with our steps, where we always have access, which at each moment we are capable of mentally reconstructing --that we must turn our attention, if our memories are to reappear. (37)

Connerton suggests that cultural memory is carried across time and transferred among members of groups through material practices. Importantly, the body plays an important role in processes of remembering. Human acts and behaviours--specified by Connerton as either commemorative rituals (such as ceremonies at the Cenotaph) and bodily practices (such as gestures or manners of dress)--carry the imprint of former events, thoughts, attitudes, and ideas. The past is kept in "habitual memory sedimented in the body" (102), and this past is a constitutive feature of human subjectivity.[1]

The question of how human subjectivity can be theorized with respect to material and spatial contexts is a question that remains to be fully explored. Michel Foucault suggests that the relative neglect of analyses of spatial relations in social discourses generally can be traced partly to the emergence of science as the authoritative discourse at the end of the eighteenth century:

> At the moment when a considered politics of spaces was starting to develop, at the end of the eighteenth century, the new achievements in theoretical and experimental physics dislodged philosophy from its ancient right to speak of the world, the cosmos, finite or infinite space. This double investment of space by political technology and scientific practice reduced philosophy to the field of a problematic of time. Since Kant, what is to be thought by the philosopher is time. Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger. Along with this goes a correlative devaluation of space, which stands on the side of the understanding, the analytical, the conceptual, the dead, the fixed, the inert. ("The Eye of Power" 149-50)

Foucault and others who have followed his lead argue that this conception of space as something dead and inert has persisted into our own time, and that "an essentially historical epistemology continues to pervade the critical consciousness of modern social theory" (Soja 10). Critical theorists have been obsessed with history, and they have perceived human life primarily in terms of cycles, developments, and periods. Foucault predicted that the contemporary epoch would be "the epoch of space" ("Of Other Spaces" 22), and he has proven to be correct. Articulated most fully by Marxist thinkers, many of them influenced by Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* which appeared in English translation in 1991, there has been a recent reevaluation of space as a critical category, and it has now become possible to think of space as dynamic and flexible, as an important medium through which to analyze social formations and processes. Critics such as the postmodern geographer Edward Soja have convincingly

argue that there is a need for a more balanced analysis of human subjectivity and social activity. It is not that time and history are no longer important; rather we need to think about human life as carried out in both time *and* space. For space is not merely a flat background against which human activity takes place, nor is it a mere abstraction. Space is social; it is inscribed by ideologies and acts; it is lived. Literary critics are only just beginning to investigate how this new conceptualization of space as a social product might change the way we read texts, but critics of autobiography, for the most part, have remained relatively uninterested in space.[2]

Why this should be so is not all that difficult to understand. For one thing, the physical, material, and social contexts in which an autobiographer exists have not always been considered very important. The origins of autobiography are in religious confession, a mode of writing which takes as foundational the notion that one's inner life is what matters most. The purpose of such writing is to enact an examination of individual consciousness--or, more precisely, one's soul. And the ultimate aim of Christian autobiographers is to establish an intimate relationship with God unfettered by worldly matters (Delaney 28). Foucault, in his later work, considers writing about the self for the purposes of confession an important "technology of the self," a practice whereby individuals act on themselves in order to reach a certain desired effect, in this case, knowledge about one's soul ("Technologies" 18). As Foucault rightly points out, there is always a public element to confession in that the subject is required to give testimony about himself, to bear witness before others. While this public discourse about the self can be enacted in front of a priest or a congregation, it can also be effected through writing, where the writer himself becomes the agent of surveillance ("Technologies" 27). The purpose of such writing is to bring to light the contents of one's mind and soul; it is not to describe the material conditions of one's existence. Thus, there is a devaluing of the materiality of physical and social life, partly because these are generally seen as the sources of temptation and corruption and partly because

the real aim of the Christian confessor is to ultimately renounce the body and material existence altogether in order to enter another realm--the realm of God.

It is an odd fact of autobiography, even into the twentieth century, that the autobiographical subject can be extraordinarily divorced from the business of living. Canonical autobiography is conventionally focused on the contents of the writer's mind: his education, the development of his thinking, and the maturing of his personality. John Stuart Mill, for instance, writes an autobiography that documents his education and his struggles to define his own intellectual life separate from his father's. He records what the significant influences on his thinking were (spending most time on Bentham and the discourse of Utilitarianism), tells of his intellectual projects, but provides very few details about the material conditions of his life. His relationship with his wife Harriet, for instance, remains largely unexplored (except as she contributed to his intellectual life, specifically in the writing of *The Subjection of Women)* as does his work as an official of the British East India Company. When Mill runs out of "mental changes" (142) to write about, the autobiography comes to an end. The American autobiographer Henry Adams writes of his travels in Europe and some of the historical events of his period both at home and abroad, but (arguably) he assigns most significance to his thoughts on science and other intellectual endeavors, including his own dynamic theory of history. Paul Jay notes that Adams claims to have written his *Education* less as a document about his life than as a literary experiment in aesthetics (154). Indeed, Adams writes about himself in the third person as if someone else had actually done the living of his life. In the twentieth century, this focus on the inner life of the individual mind, its contents, forms, and processes, has been fostered by developments in psychoanalysis, and in this respect there is perhaps no better example than Michel Leiris. Leiris' autobiographical oeuvre is modelled on clinical psychoanalysis, and the narrative is structured almost entirely around his dreams. John Sturrock nominates Leiris "The New Model Autobiographer" and suggests that the

psychology of the autobiographer, as it manifests itself in language, is paramount. Sturrock argues that "[a]s an autobiographer, Leiris lends his attention as much to language as to life, concentrating on salient words or groups of words in the certainty that these will show themselves to be privileged points of entry into his past" (58). In such comments it is clear that we are some way from the commonplace assumption that autobiography is basically about the details of a person's life. The materiality of lived experience is almost beside the point. And where the spatiality of human existence--spatiality understood as the physical matrix in which we exist and the cultural codes that both shape that matrix and position us as subjects within it--might fit into this model of autobiography becomes almost unthinkable.

One literary genre related to autobiography that has consistently been concerned with matters of space and place is travel writing. In travel writing, a genre with a long history and which takes various forms, including memoirs, letters, guide books, diaries, personal journals, explorers', surveyors', and scientists' narratives, the subject is generally concerned with describing his or her impressions of the new place, and, depending on the purpose to which the narrative is to be put (i.e. whether it is to be strictly private, published for mass consumption, or used to furnish an institution such as the home government with usable and exploitable information), the new place is often meticulously described in precise detail. As critical analyses of the genre demonstrate, although the perspective of the narrative is apparently outward, such narratives actually function to secure the subjectivity of the writer. In writing about the "other" place (and often the "other" human beings they encounter there), travellers also write about themselves. As commentators such as Mary Louise Pratt have shown, this is particularly true of travel narratives written during the period of European imperial expansion. Pratt argues that such writing generally serves to legitimize and normalize the European traveller's right to ownership and conquest of alien space. It secures his position within new territory. By definition, travel writing deals with places that are not

the writer's home territory; thus, its spatial reference and strategies of subjectification differ somewhat from the kinds of autobiographical narratives I consider in this study. My interest is in how subjects represent the places they themselves occupy as home, and how those spaces, in turn, shape subjects. Nevertheless, the ways in which particular landscapes are represented, the "othering" of indigenous inhabitants, and the production of an ideology that Pratt describes as "the-master-of-all-I-survey" are all important textual features of postcolonial autobiographical writing. Like travel writing, postcolonial autobiography is partly concerned with *how* specific places can be claimed as one's own.

The problem of self-representation, however, has most often been articulated not as a problem of location but as a problem of temporality. If travel writing is concerned with the immediacy of the subject's relation to particular environments, autobiography is concerned with trying to recapture and represent the past. Thus, time has been the main issue with which autobiography criticism has concerned itself. In the next section, I consider how this insistent focus on time has not only determined the ways in which autobiography has traditionally been read but has also produced certain models of autobiographical subjectivity.

I was Born . . . Time as Meaning in Autobiography

Saint Augustine, whose *Confessions* is readily accepted as a foundational text in the western canon of autobiography, was also among the first to recognize that, although the story of his life seemed to require an account of his birth and infancy, this particular story is one that he is not terribly well-equipped to tell. The problem, simply, is that he doesn't remember it. Instead, he can only construct an image of himself that is based on external evidence: "Later on I began to smile as well, first in my sleep, and then when I was awake. Others told me this about myself, and I believe what they said, because we see other babies do the same. But I cannot remember it myself" (25). His own memory

will not take him back to his beginnings, will not reach back to the point of origin. Although it seems clear that he must begin the account of his life with a representation of himself as an infant, and must do so because he is concerned with the question of what his relationship to God was before the beginnings of his corporeal life as well as during the course of his lifetime, Augustine is caught in the problem that confronts every autobiographer: how can he write with authority about aspects of his life that evade conscious recollection?

At issue here is the reach and accuracy of human memory. No critic would now claim that autobiography is required to reproduce factual experience (although claims to truth in autobiography are still strong, and there is often an outcry when an autobiographer is found to have fabricated large portions of his or her life story).[3] It is commonly recognized that such accuracy is impossible to achieve. As Roy Pascal puts the point in his influential early study, *Design and Truth in Autobiography*,

> [Autobiography] involves the reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived. Its centre of interest is the self, not the outside world, though necessarily the outside world must appear so that, in give and take with it, the personality finds its peculiar shape. But "reconstruction of a life" is an impossible task. A single day's experience is limitless in its radiation backward and forward. So that we have to hurry to qualify the above assertions by adding that autobiography is a shaping of the past. It imposes a pattern on a life, constructs out of it a coherent story. (9)

Verisimilitude, then, is not the point of autobiography; instead, the text is the result of the writer's deliberate shaping of his past. Autobiography presents a "special order of reality" (Olney, "Some Versions" 237) which organizes the chaos of the autobiographer's experience into a coherent pattern.

Although that "special order" does not correspond accurately to a life in time, it does, nevertheless, acquire its structure through processes of memory, which is conceived of as fundamentally temporal. James Olney's comments on this point reveal the complexity of the function of memory in autobiographical writing. A particular use of memory, he explains, determines the ontology of the autobiography, determines, that is, the nature of being or existence the text enacts. The motive of autobiography is to redeem past time ("Some Versions" 240); however, if memory is only conceived of as a backward-looking gesture, then past time and the life or *bios* of the autobiographer remain forever unrecoverable. On the other hand, suggests Olney, if we conceive of *bios* not in terms of stages (past "I's" constantly dropping away from the present "I") but in terms of process (the "I" in a perpetual state of becoming) then memory can be said to function as a faculty of the present. Memory is "an exact reflection of present being that also recapitulates and reverses the entire process by which present being has come to be what it is . . . memory can be imagined as the narrative course of the past becoming present and . . . it can be imagined also as the reflective, retrospective gathering up of that past-in-becoming into this present-as-being" ("Some Versions" 241). The movement of memory is a double movement. If the past cannot be captured in autobiographical discourse as it *was*, it can be rendered as it *is*. An engagement with the past both orders the chaos of experience and makes meaning in the present. To many critics, autobiographers are not so much concerned with who they *were*, but with who they *are*.

Susanna Egan, in *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography*, is also interested in the ways in which autobiographers organize order out of chaos and assign meaning to their inchoate lives. Egan argues that autobiographers construct their narratives according to temporally-defined life stages: childhood, youth, maturity, old age. Again, the factual content of the autobiography is less important than uncovering the hidden, meaningful patterns the autobiographer makes use of (*Patterns* 3). This model of

autobiography presumes that by enacting a retrospective passage through previous life stages--a journey Egan conceptualizes as a quest--the autobiographer is involved in a sense-making process. Presumably, by undergoing the quest and passing through the various temporal phases of his life, the autobiographer reaches a mature understanding of its meaning. This model, then, is essentially organic. It suggests that all of the bits and pieces of an individual life can be made to add up to some coherent whole. It is also based on the assumption that autobiography as a genre is itself bound by time in that it is only written by those who are either already old or fast approaching old age. This is an assumption that is challenged by contemporary autobiographical writing, much of which is written by young people who are concerned with the political efficacy of the genre, a point to which I will return.

Although both Olney and Egan construct their models of autobiography according to temporal principles, neither insists on the necessity of chronology. Paul John Eakin, on the other hand, argues that chronology is an important structure of reference in autobiography, and is so despite the fact that so many autobiographies are fragmentary and discontinuous in their organization. Eakin suggests that the ordering of experience and the narrativizing of life is a fundamental function of consciousness, not just a formal feature of literary texts; thus, the "ineluctable temporality of human experience" ("Narrative and Chronology" 36) provides not only the impulse to write autobiography but also organizes the form of the autobiographical representation of the life. That is, autobiography is structured according to temporality because, the argument goes, this is the defining feature of consciousness.

Each of these models of autobiography is grounded in temporality but is ultimately limited by the forgetting of spatiality as a function of subjectivity. There are basically three problems with this forgetting. First, basing models of autobiographical subjectivity on the temporality of human life assumes the universality of certain apparently foundational traits. The logic is that since we all begin as infants and most of

us will mature and become old, we all share a certain common experience of being human, i.e. that we all become old in the same way. Such generalizations carry with them a host of others that are also assumed to be universal. Egan's search for common "patterns of experience," for instance, takes her into the realm of mythic symbolism, and her argument relies on the common applicability of particular mythic structures, especially the heroic quest. In her discussion of childhood in autobiography, furthermore, she conceptualizes the loss of childhood innocence in terms of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and while she acknowledges the western, Christian basis of this myth, she also argues that the basic pattern of this "creation story" is universal (*Patterns* 69). In order for Egan's model to work, these mythic patterns have to be available to all autobiographers.[4] They are not necessarily, however, part of the cultural material out of which non-western, non-Christian subjectivities are constructed. Indeed, the persistent representation of European (male) experience as if it were the norm is one of the basic ideologies of imperialism. In their opposition to imperial domination, the "others" of the west have scrupulously and relentlessly articulated the *difference* of their experiences and the historical and mythic patterns that shape and inform them. Of course we all live out our lives in time, but we do not all experience or represent our lives in time in the same way.

The second problem with these temporally-defined models of autobiographical subjectivity is that they are essentially organic, in that they rely on notions of human progress and development. They assume that life is fundamentally linear, and that even if the text is not chronologically structured, autobiography is basically concerned with linear history. Life, these models instruct us, is essentially a journey or passage from moment to moment, and autobiography is something like a retrospective travel narrative. Conceived of in this way, autobiography is a record of human subjectivity constructed through the gathering up and fitting together of the bits and pieces of our past actions and experiences where each bit has a causal relationship to all others. Such

a model is basically flat and one-dimensional, predicated as it is on the idea that old "I's" are replaced with newer, smarter, more mature ones. It cannot conceive of multiplicity and contradiction within the human subject itself nor in the possibility that we might all be constantly negotiating among various subject positions all the time.

And finally, these models of autobiography fail to locate texts in the specific histories, cultures, and geographies out of which they were produced--a failure that becomes particularly obvious when the autobiographer moves between places and cultures. It has been fairly commonplace among autobiography critics to argue that the material context out of which an autobiographer writes is only incidentally important.[5] The outside world must necessarily have something to do with the construction of subjectivity, but that outside world is little more than setting. Olney claims not to be concerned with the particular origins of the autobiographical materials he chooses as his objects of study and from which he derives his theoretical model in his book *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*: "I have felt quite free to move about from century to century, from poetry to autobiography, and from Switzerland to France to England, hardly bothering to notice the time or the place of events, concerned instead with the significance of their record" (viii). He asserts that "[i]t is my notion that, though it treats often of specific places and times and individuals, and must do so to make its experience real, autobiography is more universal than it is local, more timeless than historic, and more poetic in its significance than merely personal" (viii). Here we have it then: the autobiographical subject is dehistoricized, decontextualized, despatialized. He is universal, free-floating, unlocated. Details of particular, local realities are important only as a kind of set dressing; they provide a background against which the "I" can authentically figure. But such details are secondary to the real locus of autobiographical truth which is poetic and psychological.

The theories of autobiography I have discussed are themselves specific to the particular social and cultural contexts out of which they arise. I have singled out Egan

and Olney, and, to a lesser extent, Eakin, because their work is representative of a certain bias in autobiography studies as it has developed as a field of critical inquiry in European and American academies. That bias is visible in the tendency of critics to underplay the local and particular circumstances of the autobiographer's position within specific geographic and cultural locations and to focus instead on the inner reality represented by the text. To be fair, these models might be generally applicable to the autobiographers the critics study, each of whom is firmly located within white, western, bourgeois, Christian culture[6]; however, they cannot be applied universally. To do so would be to deny the very embeddedness of subjectivities formulated in relation to particular configurations of the world. It would be to negate the specificity of local experience and the processes by which that experience has been produced as intelligible. It would also be to carry on the processes of imperialism, for one of imperialism's main projects was to capture foreign territory by denying the importance of place and culturally-specific knowledges and by imposing its own patterns and norms on the colonized site. What most western critics of autobiography have failed to take sufficiently into account is that Saint Augustine, for instance, wrote his confessions not only as a father of the church and a progenitor of western Christianity, but also as a North African. To read Saint Augustine from a metropolitan location is a very different enterprise than to read him from a peripheral or postcolonial location, as critics such as Françoise Lionnet have begun to discover. Lionnet, perhaps because she too comes from a peripheral location, Mauritius, recognizes the importance of being attentive to the "noise" of cultural difference embedded in the language of even the most canonical of autobiographical texts. And Lionnet's study *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, and Self-Portraiture,* represents a welcome new direction away from the a-spatial bias in autobiography studies I have been articulating. In positing a model of autobiographical subjectivity based on the notion of *métissage*, or the "braiding, of cultural forms" (4), Lionnet's readings of individual texts are meticulously sensitive to

and informed by the particular material and discursive conditions out of which autobiographers write.

To insist, as I do, that the subject of autobiography must be located within a particular social, historical, and geographical context is to make a leap of faith. It is to believe that the "I" of autobiography is a representation of the author who wrote the text and that the conditions of the author's life inform and shape the literary text. This is the famous "pacte autobiographique" formulated by Philippe Lejeune. Although we can readily demonstrate that autobiographers often lie in their self-representations and that autobiography and fiction are not always clearly distinguishable, the foundational fact of autobiography is that the author, narrator, and protagonist are the same person. Lejeune argues that the single identity of the author and the "I" is marked by the signature on the title page. His "pacte," then, is primarily contractual and legal, but it also attempts to confirm the connection between the textual and the real.

This point, however, has been the crux of the challenge poststructuralist theories of the human subject have brought to autobiography studies. Although poststructuralist theory is not a unified body of knowledge, one central premise is that the subject is isolated from the real and constituted only through linguistic processes. Thus, Foucault and Derrida and others have spoken of the "death of the author," a premise that has profound consequences for autobiography. In the next section, I turn to what I highlighted as the second preoccupation of autobiography studies--the problem of reference--in order to consider first the political consequences of the challenge that poststructuralist thought has brought to autobiography studies, and second under what conditions we might understand autobiographical subjectivity as having a vital connection to the real.

The Problem of Reference

A poststructuralist reading of autobiography is perhaps most succinctly articulated by Paul de Man in his influential essay "Autobiography as De-facement." In this essay, de Man argues that the study of autobiography has been dogged by the stubborn insistence of most of its critics that autobiography is at least potentially verifiable, i.e. that there is a connection between the word and the world and that the author of the text is the source of that connection. At the centre of this (false) notion, argues de Man, is the matter of linguistic reference. Whereas most critics of autobiography tend to believe that the referent (the author) determines the linguistic construct (the "I"), de Man insists that the "I" is a trope, a figure, a linguistic sign. For de Man, the referentiality of autobiography is not an either/or matter; it is not that the "I" either is or is not the person; rather, autobiography marks the *production* of an "I." He asks, "is the illusion of reference not a correlation of the structure of the figure, that is to say no longer clearly and simply a referent at all but something more akin to a fiction which, in its turn, acquires a degree of referential productivity?" (920-21). For de Man, there can be no epistemological authority of the "I" or, indeed, the author's signature, for the structure of autobiography--like any text--is tropological. Autobiography is less a discrete genre grounded in verisimilitude than a way of reading (921). Thus, the reader of autobiography--not the author--is the source of meaning, and it is the reader who signs the text through interpreting its figurative and essentially fictive language.

De Man brings to the study of autobiography, then, a basic tenet of poststructuralist theory: that the self--understood as a unified, self-knowing entity that can be expressed in language--is no longer tenable. Michael Sprinker, arguing from a similar premise, announces "the end of autobiography," and argues that "the self can no more be author of its own discourse than any producer of a text can be called the author --that is the originator--of his writing" (325). And Candace Lang, critiquing what she considers the latent Romanticism of autobiography studies echoes this premise in her

statement that "[t]he shifter 'I' is an empty signifier, merely serving to designate the speaker, renewing itself with each utterance in which it occurs; indeed, it is a fiction, since its only context of reference is the particular instance of discourse in which it appears" (13). Thus, for poststructuralist readers, there is no realm of reference outside of language. The difficulty here is that the dispersed, linguistically-produced, non-coherent "I" that poststructuralism theorizes is once again divorced from the material conditions of human life, conditions shaped by politics, history, economics, geography, race, gender, and so on. It is a subject located nowhere and in no time. It is detached and dislocated. It is a subject, then, that cannot be held accountable, for it does not really exist in the messy world of politics. And this subject, as several commentators have pointed out, although ostensibly denied epistemological authority, is potentially just as hegemonic and limiting as the old universal "self" of bourgeois western humanism.

Not all critics of autobiography, however, have been so ready to follow the lead of contemporary poststructuralist theory. Janet Varner Gunn charges that both classical autobiography theory and that influenced by poststructuralist thought divorce autobiography from the realm of lived experience and reduce it to a reified textual system that is outside of time. Gunn reads the "self" that has traditionally been the object of study in autobiography as a "hidden or ghostly self which is absolute, ineffable, and timeless" (8). As a corrective to this view, she insists that the subject of autobiography is not a hidden but a "displayed self," who inhabits a world and is anchored to temporality and spatiality (9). And although the bringing of a life to language necessarily means that the life is mediated and shaped (i.e. to some extent fictive), the representation of a life cannot be separated from the human and cultural context of contingent historical experience out of which it is formed. Simply put, Gunn argues that the very act of creating autobiography involves "grounding" the self. The central question in her view "becomes *where do I belong?* not, who am I? The question

of the self's identity becomes a question of the self's location in a world" (23, emphasis in the original).

As the title of his latest study of autobiography indicates, Paul John Eakin is also increasingly concerned with the ways in which autobiography "touches the world." Taking up the poststructuralist challenge that the "I" of autobiography does not guarantee epistemological authority, Eakin attempts to demonstrate that even the most committed of poststructuralist autobiographers--his prime example is Roland Barthes--retains a belief in an "I" that can both be experienced as psychically whole and articulated in language. The very act of writing autobiography, argues Eakin, necessarily reveals a persistent faith in the possibility of language to convey subjectivity. "[A]utobiography is nothing if not a referential art," he insists (*Touching* 28). On this point, Eakin aligns himself with Lejeune. Although Lejeune is persuaded by the notion that an authentic "self" can never be known through language, he is unwilling to deny the possibility of autobiography--the possibility that the "I" can mark real, experiential presence--altogether. In a remarkable moment of "confession," which speaks to the frustration many critics have felt when grappling with the problem of autobiographical reference, Lejeune writes,

> I believe that we can promise to tell the truth; I believe in the transparency of language, and in the existence of a complete subject who expresses himself through it; I believe that my proper name guarantees my autonomy and my singularity (even though I have crossed several Philippe Lejeunes in my life); I believe that when I say "I," it is I who am speaking; I believe in the Holy Ghost of the first person. And who doesn't believe in it? But of course it also happens that I believe the contrary, or at least claim to believe it. . . . "In the field of the subject, there is no referent" [from *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*]. To a lesser degree, and more candidly, many autobiographers have outlined

> analogous strategies. We *indeed know* all this; we are not so dumb, but, once this precaution has been taken, we go on as if we did not know it. Telling the truth about the self, constituting the self as complete subject--it is a fantasy. In spite of the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing. (131-32, ellipsis in the original)

The autobiographical "I", then, is a believable fantasy. It grounds our existence. It answers to our desire to make sense of our lives. What matters most, perhaps, is *why* we need to go on believing in autobiographical reference.

Eakin's purpose in *Touching the World*, like Gunn's, is to bring theoretical discussions of autobiography out of the realm of abstract thought and into the arena of lived experience. He admits that such a shift relies on the reader's willingness to have faith in both the ability of language to convey experience and the writer's sincere intent to do so. However, Eakin also, rightly I think, points out that belief in the "referential aesthetic" of autobiography does not necessarily entail the adoption of what have become automatic correlative assumptions, the conventional tenets of bourgeois western humanism which he describes as follows: the assumption that the "I" is a fully constituted plenitude preexisting language and capable of being accurately expressed in it; the belief that language is a transparent medium of expression permitting unmediated access to the world; the notion that chronological narrative is the natural form for autobiography (*Touching* 30-31).[7] Eakin argues that the complexity and variability of autobiographical reference renders each of these apparent "truths" questionable. Nevertheless, poststructuralism's deconstruction of the unified "self"--and its attendant assumptions--is, for many, an untenable alternative, for rendering the "I" as purely textual seems to relegate it to a realm that is politically vacuous. Autobiographers, *despite* the difficulties of representing their subjectivities in language, continue to attempt to do so. Readers, *despite* the insights of poststructuralist theories, continue to read autobiography believing that there is a connection between the "I" in the text and

the person in the world whom it represents. For many autobiographers, moreover, reference is a matter of vital importance. What matters, perhaps, is not how the "I" does or does not represent the real but how the "I" is deployed as a textual site around which issues of identity accrue.

The critique of the "metaphysics of presence" that poststructuralism initiated understandably produces a certain anxiety, especially in peoples who have been denied full "presence" by imperialist and patriarchal discourses that have rendered them silent. As G. Pratt argues, what contemporary theoretical discourses are increasingly concerned with is not a metaphysics but a "politics of presence" (241). Real lives are at stake in the debate. And the genre of autobiography, precisely because it deals with an individual's attempt to come to terms with his or her life, is an important textual site within which various "politics of presence" are being worked out. Eakin notes that the human subject is a problematic category with which numerous disciplines are obsessed,[8] but he also notes that the particular notion of subjectivity that has proven to be so troublesome is firmly rooted in western culture and history (*Touching* 74-77). Eakin is neither the first nor the only critic to make this point. Certain feminist and postcolonial scholars have made the argument that it is one thing for white, male, bourgeois theorists who are securely positioned within European and American academies to announce that the "self" and the "author" are dead, but it is quite another thing for people who have been oppressed by patriarchal and imperialist discursive systems to adopt this particular theoretical line. Members of minority and marginalized social groups--the colonized, non-whites, aboriginals, women, gays and lesbians, the disabled, the poor--have never had full access to the concept of the subject contemporary Euro-American theory now seems so determined to discredit. Nancy Hartsock has suggested that poststructuralism's challenge to representational claims associated with the human subject and the emergence of various resistance movements around the world coincide in a way that is troubling:

> Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be theorized. (163-64)

Hartsock does not wish to suggest that there is a conspiracy at work here; rather she wishes to point out that the very skepticism concerning the possibility of defining a viable and meaningful concept of subjectivity is itself a residue of the ideologies of western Enlightenment.

This is not to say that matters of subjectivity are not problems for the "others" of the west; rather, it is to say that the crisis in representation that has made the concept of the subject a problem is experienced differently in different geopolitical and cultural locations. As the postcolonial critic Kumkum Sangari argues, meaning and referentiality are also problems for third world writers; however, they are not problematic in the same way as they are for European and American theorists. Sangari suggests that the dismantling of the real and the dismembering of fact are a product of historical circumstances that have produced an overriding "epistemological despair" peculiar to western peoples (161). However, the crisis in meaning and representation experienced by non-western peoples is of a different order. As Sangari argues, being aware of the contingency of fact and the ambiguity of meaning in a third world location means "assert[ing] another *level* of factuality, to cast and resolve the issues of meaning on another, more dialectical plane, a plane on which the notion of knowledge as provisional and of truth as historically circumscribed is not only *necessary* for understanding, but can in turn be made to *work* from positions of engagement within the local and contemporary" (161). Euro-American poststructuralist theoretical practice tends to conceptualize a subject that is disembodied, dislocated, and, ultimately,

disenfranchised, but this subject, although it pretends to be universal, is actually firmly grounded in western culture and its contemporary malaise.

Others may see the problems and possibilities of autobiographical reference differently. One of the ways in which marginalized, colonized subjects have sought to resist the totalizing capture of their experience and knowledges within a Eurocentric epistemology is to attempt to take back the power of representation. Autobiography would seem to be a particularly appropriate and effective genre for this project, for autobiography always makes that necessary gesture towards the real even if we can readily grant that much of what is actually represented is, because of the vicissitudes of language and memory, necessarily fictionalized. It is possible, as Lejeune reminds us, to believe absolutely in language's fantasies. In addition, autobiography is a remarkably democratic genre. No longer the exclusive domain of famous and learned men and women, autobiography is a form available even to "those who do not write."[9] Toni Morrison argues that autobiography is a vital African-American cultural archive, for the origins of black American print literature are to be found in the autobiographical narratives of slaves. Although we have to allow, as Morrison does, that the self-representations of the oppressed will be partly shaped and mediated by the interests of the dominant society, we cannot simply dismiss such narratives as impure texts. Life narratives offer an alternative record of history, and they can be, as they are for Morrison, both a significant literary inheritance and the ground upon which political activity might be formulated (299).

Of course life narratives of non-western peoples have long been of interest to western audiences and have spurred a whole industry of ethnographic writing. Only recently, however, have significant numbers of marginalized and disenfranchised people gained access to print and begun to produce their own self-authored life narratives. In part, this movement testifies to a political imperative outlined by Hartsock. If existing power structures are to be dismantled and alternative, more egalitarian structures put in

their place, then one of the things that has to happen is for the marginalized to recognize and assert that they can be the subjects of history not just its object (170). Further, the marginalized must "develop an account of the world that treats [their] perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of a different world" (171). Autobiography is an important genre in which such political work goes on. Despite the impossibility of representing oneself authentically or mimetically--of getting one's "perspective" *right*--the attempt to articulate one's own subjectivity in language is a crucial act of self-empowerment. Indeed, it is precisely because there has been so much written *about* them that marginalized subjects are using the genre of autobiography, where the "I" is at the centre of the text and embedded within a culturally-specific context, to political effect.

Aboriginal Subjectivity

To what extent marginalized subjects can establish their own subjectivity as primary and different, and represent that difference in language, is a debate with particular relevance to any discussion of Australian and Canadian aboriginal autobiography. Although I have been arguing against the dispersal and disenfranchisement of the subject, I am not automatically arguing for its apparent opposite: the essential "self." Like Eakin, I do not believe that faith in the possibility of subjectivity experienced as primary and meaningful necessarily means pledging allegiance to all of the attendant baggage of western bourgeois humanism. But how to negotiate between urgent claims for the authentic, essential "self" and certain theoretical perspectives that would disallow such claims is no easy task.

Diana Fuss has gone some way towards articulating what a middle ground between what she terms "constructionism"--the notion that subjects are constituted by and positioned in relation to social discourses--and "essentialism"--the notion that subjects have identities that are true, fixed, and authorized by experience--might look

like. The essentialized subject is supported by the apparent authority of personal experience, which, in turn, is underwritten by a metaphysics of presence. After Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis, however, it is no longer possible to credit personal experience with absolute authority. Fuss argues that experience need not necessarily be understood as that which simply reflects or presents the real. Rather, personal experience--which is frequently mobilized by marginalized people as the crucial ground from which to speak--can itself be read as a complex effect of social construction. Writes Fuss,

> If experience is itself a product of ideological practices, as Althusser insists, then perhaps it might function as a window onto the complicated workings of ideology. Experience would itself then become "evidence" of a sort for the productions of ideology, but evidence which is obviously constructed and clearly knowledge-dependent. What I mean by this is simply that experience is not the raw material knowledge seeks to understand, but rather knowledge is the active process which produces its own objects of investigation, including empirical facts. (118)

Thus, claims to essentialism are themselves ideology-bound, and the discursive conditions under which they are mobilized provide an occasion for analysis. Fuss makes the argument that essentialism is less a foundational quality of things than an idea that can be strategically deployed in order to produce certain effects. What matters for Fuss are the social and political conditions that underlie various claims to or dismissals of essentialism, and she asks important questions about how, when, why, and by whom the concept of essentialism is evoked.

Claims to essentialism have initiated some debate in postcolonial contexts. For some critics, the idea that there is a residual, native "self" that has survived the discursive authority of imperialism and effectively resisted its disciplinary control is an important notion to mobilize as part of a politics of decolonization. Benita Parry, for

instance, criticizes prominent postcolonial critics Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Abdul JanMohamed for mobilizing "analytical strategies which in focusing on the deconstruction of the colonialist text, either erase the voice of the native or limit native resistance to devices circumventing and interrogating colonial authority" (34). What these critics fail to do, in Parry's view, is to recognize the oppositional authority of anti-imperialist revolutionary discourse which has always been present. Instead, they "obliterate the role of the native as historical subject and combatant, possessor of another knowledge and producer of alternative traditions" (34) and keep the native subject forever within western culture's orbit.

Parry's critique, as commentator Anne Maxwell rightly points out (70), is aimed primarily at Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who has argued in her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that the native subject, figured in her essay as the subaltern Indian woman, is doubly determined by the discourses of colonialism and Indian patriarchy as it colludes with imperialism. The subaltern woman, according to Spivak, must be understood as a silent subject who can be "selved"[10] neither by an appeal to lost origins or canny native insurgency (as Parry suggests) nor by the machinations of Anglo-American feminist theory which would locate her resistant subjectivity in her (essentialized) "lived experience" ("Can" 295). In Spivak's view, there is no space untouched by imperialism's operations. An appeal to "concrete experience" as proof that the colonized subject knows something that is not regulated by the discourses of western imperialist authority marks a return to positivist empiricism which, in her view, functions not to buttress the combative posture of the oppressed but to provide an alibi for advanced capitalist neocolonialism which is able to justify itself by a similar logic--the apparent transparency and fixity of "the way things are" ("Can" 275). For Spivak, the question of the colonized native subject cannot be divorced from the arena of the international division of labour, both past and present.

The point of debate between Spivak and Parry has to do with the struggle over different models of native subjectivity. To argue, as Parry does, that the native subject is the possessor of alternative knowledges and traditions is to re-place within discourse analysis, a concept of authenticity. Parry wishes to validate the native subject as a speaking voice that has consistently refused the authority of European imperialism through "nationalist discourses of revolution" (35). That voice, she suggests, is to be found in the "material realities" of the contemporary native subject which are partly structured by past knowledges and practices:

> Since the native woman is constructed within multiple social relationships and positioned as the product of different class, caste and cultural specificities, it should be possible to locate traces and testimony of women's voice on those sites where women inscribed themselves as healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, artizans [sic] and artists, and by this to modify Spivak's model of the silent subaltern. (35)

But this notion of the subject as speaker of an-other knowledge, as Spivak points out, elides the work of ideological interpellation ("Can" 286). It suggests that there is a direct path from knowledge to consciousness. It also suggests that information retrieval --the preserving of languages and cultural practices--will guarantee the efficacy of the native consciousness as the ground of an emancipated postcolonial identity. As her alternative reading of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* suggests, Parry believes in "the native, female, individual Self who defies the demands of the discriminatory discourses impinging on her person" (Parry 38). Parry criticizes Spivak's "deliberated [sic] deafness to the native voice where it is to be heard" (Parry 39), but she does not consider how that "voice" is to be understood except as reflective of a pre-existing reality. Although it is understandable that a subject conceived of as authentic and in full possession of her own knowledge and voice is an idea that has a lot of appeal within emancipatory discourses and movements, it is crucial to remember that there is no pure

space outside of the ideological interpellation of imperialist discourse. This, I take it, is Spivak's main point. It is not so much that she discounts the possibility of native resistance altogether; it is simply that she refuses to agree that such resistance can be located outside of the realms of imperialism, patriarchy, and capitalism as these discourses have been settled upon colonized places and peoples.

It is perhaps especially important to critique the notion of an authentic native "self" when the marginalized and oppressed "other" adopts the first person and speaks, apparently, in her own voice and from her own personal experience, as is the case in aboriginal autobiography. One way of effecting such a critique is to demonstrate that the assumption underlying the notion that the aboriginal subject speaks in an unmediated voice is not necessarily an assumption that originates in traditional aboriginal cultures. This is Stephen Muecke's strategy in his essay "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis." Bringing the debate about the authenticity of the aboriginal subject to the specific context of Australian Aboriginal literature, Muecke argues that such a model actually relies on western Enlightenment and Romantic notions of the subject as source of truth and meaning ("Repressive" 406). Muecke points out that this line of argument relies on reestablishing what he calls (after Foucault) an "ethical technology of the self" (418). This technology describes the writer as the holder of a series of truths that have been repressed because the writer himself is marginalized and oppressed by a hegemonic culture. Given the right moment and opportunity, the argument goes, these truths will be revealed. Moreover, the writer, now imagined not as society's repressed "other" but as a politically vigilant and active "self," has a responsibility to set the record straight by countering false representations with more accurate ones. Muecke points out that the truth value readers have been curiously willing to assign to Aboriginal autobiographies presumes a transparency of the literary sign that has been rigorously critiqued in other contexts. This is partly a response to the demand that the historically oppressed Aboriginal must be allowed to speak his or her own story, no matter how

mediated the narrative is, and that the job of critics is simply to listen. It is also a response to the charge that the critical tools of Anglo-American literary theory are inappropriate ones to bring to Aboriginal texts, or, to put it another way, Aboriginal writing and non-Aboriginal writing cannot be compared or read on the same terms.

There is, however, no good reason to assume that Aboriginal writers are any more capable of accessing and representing the truth of their personal experiences through language than anyone else. Moreover, it seems to me that to argue for the authenticity of the Aboriginal subject on the basis of her ability to express the truth about herself risks reinscribing a notion of subjectivity that has historically functioned to oppress her most efficiently: that is, that the Aboriginal (or native, or colonial) subject is at root simple, unsophisticated, and readily knowable. "Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible," argues Homi K. Bhabha ("The Other Question" 156). Through the simultaneous maintenance of native difference *from* the white western subject and the disavowal of differences *among* native subjects, colonial authority could treat its subjects as an unchanging and recognizable population that could be effectively and efficiently managed. Heterogeneity among native subjects was necessarily ignored, for the very structure of the system relied on stereotypical representations that were fetishized by the dominant culture.[11] Models of aboriginal subjectivity that attempt to reinscribe the essential native "self," it seems to me, enact a similar epistemological move. They are persuasive precisely because they appear to *explain* the aboriginal subject as different and primary, but they are also dangerous because they promote a notion of the "authentic aboriginal" which all aboriginals are then required to perform. Ensuing issues such as who counts as aboriginal and what kinds of statements and texts he or she is permitted to produce become highly contentious.

This is perhaps the most troubling difficulty with any model of aboriginal subjectivity that posits a fundamental difference between the aboriginal subject and the

subject of western humanism. Nevertheless, such models continue to carry critical weight precisely because in affirming such differences they appear to avoid the trap of universalizing western subjectivity. One of the most persuasive proponents of the idea that aboriginal subjectivity is inherently different from western subjectivity is Arnold Krupat.[12] In a chapter on Native American autobiography in his book *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature*, Krupat posits a model of native subjectivity that he describes as a "synecdochic self." The trope synecdoche establishes a part-to-whole relation between the individual and the "collective social units or groupings" of which the individual is a member (212):

> . . . in so far as we would attempt to generalize about the Native American self from the available studies, that self would seem to be less attracted to introspection, expansion, or fulfillment than the Western self appears to be. It would seem relatively uninterested in things as the "I-am-me" experience, and a sense of uniqueness or individuality. More positively, one might perhaps instantiate an "I-am-we" experience as descriptive of the Native sense of self, where such a phrase indicates that I understand myself as a self only in relation to the coherent and bounded whole of which I am a part . . . . (209-10)

Krupat suggests, then, that the native "I" stands in contiguous relation to her or his community and cannot be understood apart from that community (213). Although he does not explicitly state that the community necessarily be the traditional community of tribal societies, this model does posit an "I" articulated in relation to some formulation of "the people." It is a model that has been brought to bear on the autobiographical writings of various marginalized groups.[13] Central to Krupat's thesis is his belief that this synecdochic model of subjectivity derives from native modes of information transmission, which have traditionally been oral. The native "I" comes into being through the *performance* of the "self"; self-representation is spoken, dramatic, public,

and relies on the presence of a listening/reading audience. It can, then, be understood as a political subject whose role is to speak and act not for him or herself alone but on behalf of others in the community. In this sense, aboriginal autobiography can be judged in terms of its responsibility to the community.

In Australia, the promotion of Aboriginality as the ideological ground for a pan-Aboriginal identity relies on just this sense of the individual as part of a meaningful and politically active collective. Predicated on the double assumption that Aboriginal peoples of various shades of skin colour and different personal backgrounds all derive from the original inhabitants of the continent and have been universally oppressed by a dominant white settler society, the discourse of Aboriginality has been an important rallying point from which a politics of resistance has been launched. As Robert Ariss argues, the discourse of Aboriginality is a counter-discourse which seeks to ground Aboriginal identity in "the existential experience of being Aboriginal" and which "asserts the impossibility of the complete merging of black and white understandings" (132). Although no one would deny the heterogeneity of Aboriginal peoples themselves--there have always been many different tribal groups, languages, and cultures--the discourse of Aboriginality has sought to minimize those differences in order to mount a politics of resistance based on unity. My argument is that such a move still requires a notion of essentialized Aboriginal authenticity. Instead of locating authenticity in tribal cultural practice, however, which can be dismissed as being impossible to retrieve in any pure way, this new discourse of Aboriginality locates authenticity in a more timeless, existential realm of being. But it still posits an essential difference between "us" and "them," and it still mobilizes a notion of Aboriginal essence.

Emphasizing the fundamental differences between the subjectivities of Australian Aboriginals and North American Natives and their European-descended oppressors and advocating an existential aboriginality or nativeness which has survived

colonialism's control can doubtless be an effective political tactic. Such a notion can provide a necessary point of unity among diverse peoples with various backgrounds. It can also function as a starting point for the formulation of counter-discourses--historical, legal, sociological, literary--which put the perspectives and concerns of aboriginal peoples in the foreground. When such a notion is brought to bear upon autobiographical writing, however, it has the potential to be hegemonic. Models of Aboriginal or Native subjectivity that attempt to fix ideas of the (authentic) Aborigine or the (authentic) Native can only be prescriptive and oppressive in their turn. Whatever idiosyncratic mixture of ideologies and experiences that combine to produce a particular subject--including, of course, knowledges derived from contact with western culture--must necessarily problematize such models. A reading practice that concentrates only on the collective identity of the aboriginal "I," for instance, would have to downplay the specificity of particular subjects and would disallow whatever private and individual feelings and needs may have motivated the aboriginal subject to write autobiography in the first place. At least one critic of Australian Aboriginal literature, Mudrooroo (formerly Mudrooroo Narogin), uses precisely these terms to evaluate the authenticity of Aboriginal writing. Mudrooroo criticizes texts such as Sally Morgan's *My Place* (which I discuss in chapter four) on the grounds that it is too individual and not sufficiently community-oriented (149-50). Further, the attendant focus on the aboriginal speaker as battler against a generalized oppression of her people risks reinforcing the representation of the subject as victim. Not only are degrees of oppression or different ways of being victimized not recognized, but also the subject's relative privilege is construed as suspect. Models of aboriginal subjectivity based on essentialized notions of an aboriginal "self" inherently different from and uncontaminated by western cultural discourses and forms, then, risk covering up the very point that might argue most forcefully against the oppression of aboriginal peoples. This point is that aboriginal peoples are complex and sophisticated contemporary human beings with a diverse range

of origins, experiences, concerns, and knowledges. And finally, we must not forget that the very genre which aboriginal peoples employ to write their life stories--autobiography--must necessarily render their textual productions hybrid, if not inauthentic. There is just no way to avoid the fact that aboriginal autobiographers use a western discourse in order to tell a non-western story. In doing so they produce complex, hybrid texts in which many discourses interact and intersect. These are not simple texts, nor are the "I's" they inscribe.

Reading aboriginal autobiography requires attention to the differences and contradictions both among aboriginal peoples and differences and contradictions within the particular aboriginal subject herself. As Shirley Neuman argues in her essay "Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences," formulations of subjectivity that are based on what makes members of a minority group different from the hegemonic "self" of western bourgeois humanism can sometimes produce another dangerous and paralyzing binary opposition between the group identity (the one that is considered politically viable) and the individual (222-23). Neuman suggests that one of the ways out of this impasse is to read autobiographical texts in terms of a "poetics of differences." Such a reading practice would require critics to "enact a series of *simultaneous* and *multiple* gestures" (223, emphasis in the original), whereby they would pay attention both to the broad social constructions of subjectivity and to the idiosyncratic and complex discourse of the individual. Such a reading practice would allow for heterogeneity in that a particular aboriginal subject could be understood both in terms of his or her formation in relation to a group consciousness and in terms of what makes him or her different *from* categories such as Aboriginal or Native. Such a reading practice, in short, would allow for a multiply-determined subjectivity. And it would also, importantly, require attention to the specificity of textual detail, an attention that is all too often lacking in discussions of aboriginal autobiography. Neuman's use of the term "poetics" reminds us that autobiographies are not simply tracts that make

political statements--although they are that too. Autobiographies are complex literary texts in which subjectivity is never simply *there* but is produced in acts of language.

Locating Agency

> Opposition is not enough. In that vacant space after one has resisted there is still the necessity to become--to make oneself anew. . . . That process emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one's life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as one invents new, alternative habits of being, and resists from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined.
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> bell hooks
> *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*
> (15)

Totalizing models of subjectivity will never be of much use. Whether we are all completely constructed by social discourses or all self-determined and self-determining individuals, both notions of subjectivity oversimplify complex lived realities. There is never a tidy overlap between theory and social practice--although they are intimately related--nor is there a neat fit between academically-defined discourses and lived realities. This is neither to dismiss theory as irrelevant, nor to reify the binary opposition between theory and politics; rather it is to shift the priority of theory in literary criticism. Theory does not create reality, make certain conditions and knowledges possible; rather, theory provides us with the tools to begin to understand how certain conditions and knowledges come into being and why some are more powerful, more compelling, than others. Social realities will always exceed and frustrate any currently orthodox theoretical model or structural principle. What theory does is make it possible for us to identify patterns. By making the underpinnings of ideologies and social formations that shape us visible, theory offers us the tools of critique and, perhaps, as bell hooks desires, the possibility "to make oneself anew."

Autobiography provides the opportunity for an individual to examine his or her own subjectivity. The basic material of autobiography is the writer's own experience, but, if we recall Diana Fuss's comments--that personal experience does not have epistemological authority but is, rather, evidence of ideological interpellation--then we can understand autobiography as a textual site wherein a particular writer undertakes an analysis of the various discourses that shape his or her perspective, knowledge, and history. In an argument that parallels Fuss's, Joan W. Scott suggests that experience is "not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces" (26). Autobiography, as a record of an individual's experience, then, is not so much about the discovery of truth, as Scott goes on to explain, as it is about "the substitution of one truth for another" (35). Truth, then, is not only partial but contingent.

I want to speak about how difficult it is to give up the apparent authority of personal experience. I too fear that if I abandon the idea that I can speak from my own experience then I will have no words that are my own. I too fear that I will only be able to speak the languages of the power structures that keep me in my place and make me their subject. I too fear deferring to the authority of an external, impersonal language that seems to undervalue the particular combination of physical and psychic processes, events and stories, places and people that have combined to produce me.

At a friend's house one night, early in the process of my writing this dissertation, the conversation shifts to the question of the human subject. We all know our theories, but we all want to talk about agency, that object of our desire in which we all want--urgently--to believe. We drink wine; it gets late. We carry on. Our discussion is heated. We really care about this stuff. (I pay scrupulous attention, looking for the

sentence, the idea, the word that will solve the problem, show me the way out of "constructionism.") I am conscious that even at our most erudite moments, when we are quoting one learned theorist after another, we all fall back on some idea of personal experience. We test our theories against our lives. Sometimes we back away from theory charging it with elitism, saying that it is irrelevant to social realities and politics. But somehow theory also makes sense. Perhaps that's what theory is: a sense-making process.

The personal won't go away. We tell anecdotes, offer events in our lives as evidence that seems to either prove or disprove a particular theoretical position. But I wonder: what would my experience have meant to me without the insights of theory? Without postcolonial theory would I have realized that my position within Canadian society was something to be reckoned with rather than simply assumed? Without Marxist and feminist theories could I have begun to read and contextualize the contents and effects of my own English childhood? No. I would have continued to think of my childhood and the lessons I learned there as simply the way things were. I would have accepted rather than begun to ask questions. Perhaps that's the point: theory helps us to denaturalize "the way things are," and it allows us to see that terrible things can be covered up by such a statement. If we want to change the world--and of course we do! (academics are, I think, unrepentant idealists)--then perhaps our starting point should be a critical analysis of what we think of as our own personal experience. Perhaps this is our most difficult task. To bring what we have learned in the academy back home, into our most intimate and private spheres, to put our "selves" under the spotlight of critical inquiry.

As the insights of poststructuralist thought have taught us, there is no such thing as an authentic "self" that is *not* at least partly shaped by ideologies beyond individual control and even conscious knowledge. Agency is never absolute. Nevertheless, if we

think of subjectivity not so much as a series of laws that overlay and weigh down a particular subject but as a network of discourses and effects that intersect and sometimes compete and conflict with one another, then it becomes possible to conceive of limited agency. Paul Smith, in *Discerning the Subject*, argues that the subject is constantly called upon to take up multifarious subject positions, but the subject cannot unify these subject positions without contradiction. "This contradiction, or whole set of contradictions, and the negativity which underpin them and produce them are what releases the 'subject' from perfect self-identity, homogeneity, and fixity" (150). Thus, contradiction is a sign of the slippage between discourses that perhaps marks the space of agential action. It is not that there is a position outside of ideology from which to mount resistance, suggests Smith, but that ideological interpellation produces a locus of conflict and resistance (xxxi).

According to Smith, the human subject *exceeds* the subject of ideology (xxx); the subject is never entirely dominated by any single structure. And this is a crucial point, for the multiple and differing demands made by various discourses that act on and through us require us to legislate among them. Furthermore, as Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith argue, it is impossible to delineate and fix the various demands made on the subject by competing discourses:

> The axes of the subject's identifications and experiences are multiple, because locations in gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality complicate one another, and not merely additively . . . . Nor do different vectors of identification and experience overlap neatly or entirely. One cannot easily sever, separate out, or subsume under one another the strands of multiple determinations. ("Introduction" xiv)

There is no priority or hierarchy among discourses, rather the subject lives a complex experience shaped by an intricate web of discursive authorities and effects.

Furthermore, as Paul Smith demonstrates, discourses have histories and are not timeless and eternal (xxxiv). Therefore, it must be the case that new social realities are possible. How to bring them about? Not by force of will, certainly. But perhaps through sustained critique and analysis and, thereby, the refusal of certain realities as universal or inevitable. It is the interrogation of discourses that points the way towards understanding not only how discourses position us as their subjects but also how they might be altered.[14] Through sustained readings, analyses, and interrogations of ideologically-determined discourses, the human subject can articulate not only her own position within various dominant discourses, such as patriarchy or colonialism, but she can also articulate a counter-discourse that resists their demands. Resistance cannot be mounted from a position outside discourse; resistance works to undermine from within.

To write autobiography is to be both author and reader of a life. It is to read one's subjectivity in order to write one's subjectivity, and this, I believe, is an ongoing process in the production of autobiography rather than a prior act or a point of arrival. Self-critically reading and narrating our subjectivities is not just a matter of remembering and collecting facts and details; rather it is a matter of exploring everything personal *and* cultural that has gone into the making of the "I" we think ourselves to be. It is a matter of becoming self-conscious and self-reflexive, of recognizing how social structures and power systems have positioned us in certain ways. But it is also a matter of investigating how the individual matrix of our particular circumstances has prompted us to take certain actions, hold certain ideas, and not others. The great value of autobiography, it seems to me, is that in reading and writing their own lives, autobiographers articulate the misfits and contradictions inherent in existing as a subject in a world that is both experienced as individual and particular and simultaneously larger than any individual life.

In her recent book *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English*, Helen M. Buss proposes the trope of "mapping" as the most productive way of

conceiving of human subjectivity as it is represented in autobiography. Maps, notes Buss, do not claim to be mimetic representations of reality; rather, they suggest contours and shapes that are flexible and which change over time. They can account, then, for the multiple and shifting features of subjectivity. Furthermore, conceiving of subject formation as a process of mapping demands that precise details of environment (social structure, culture, group affiliations) and location (both spatial and historical circumstances) be taken into account. Mapping, says Buss, "can be seen metaphorically as joining the activities of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. Language 'maps' both the self and the coexistent world" (9). If autobiography is analogous to a map, then how the "I" is situated in relation to a particular geographic, historical, and cultural context becomes part of the necessary groundwork of critical investigation and interpretation.

This seemingly simple notion, I suggest, marks a point of productive intersection between a postcolonial critical practice and readings of autobiographical texts. A postcolonial reading practice, such as that enacted by Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin in *Decolonising Fictions*, is one that contends that "the construction of identity (whether that be of nation or race) [is] an interested and socially contingent act, wrested from competing claims to authority that vary according to local circumstances" (13). An awareness that subjectivity is not a given but is *produced* in relation to social and cultural forces--forces that shape the way people conceive of and occupy their own home territory--is one of the fundamental principles of postcolonialism and one which provides a new critical perspective from which to read autobiography. All of the autobiographers discussed in this study have experienced--although very differently--the hegemony of white settler social formations that shape their homes and define them as subjects. It is my argument that autobiography is an important textual site where specific Canadian and Australian "I's" are inscribed in specific relations with discourses of place. For some autobiographers this might mean narrating the authenticity and

positivity of the local environment as a way of countering an imperialist history in which the local has been denigrated or erased; for others it might mean countering a nationalist discourse which attempts to homogenize specific local histories. In all of my readings of autobiographical texts, my main interest is in the ways in which abstract and symbolic discourses of place are taken up by and internalized as personal.

Within the social spaces of Canada and Australia, locating one's place means engaging in the political contest over territory. It also means positioning oneself within a specifically postcolonial discursive site that is itself fragmentary, internally divided, simultaneously contestatory and contested. The very meaning of the term "postcolonial" has been the subject of vigorous debate.[15] Does it describe a field of critical inquiry? Does it delimit a specific group of literary texts? Does it characterize a particular mode of writing? Is the "post" a temporal marker signalling the end of Empire and its aftermath?[16] Both the meaning of the term and the critical strategies it names are far from settled. For my purposes, and in the specific context of my readings of Canadian and Australian autobiography, I have found Sneja Gunew's formulation of "postcolonial" most useful.

Careful to avoid the homogenous levelling that frequently accompanies fixing any definition, Gunew works from a position that is attentive to the productive intersections of postmodernist, postcolonial, and feminist critiques. Her understanding of postcolonialism derives from Jean-François Lyotard's formulation of the meaning of postmodernism. "Post," in this sense, explains Gunew, "is not a temporal term but analogous to the analysand who undertakes to work through certain 'forgotten' moments s/he is otherwise condemned to repeat forever." Arguing that it is most useful to think of the "post" in postcolonialism (as well as post-feminism and post-modernism) as signalling that which has previously gone unexamined, Gunew suggests "post" marks "a going back (reminiscence as in anamnesis [sic]) in order not to repeat but to get somewhere else." It is this enterprise--going back to remember but not to repeat, to

revisit but to end up elsewhere--that I think characterizes postcolonial autobiography. The past can never be reclaimed, but it can be reinhabited--*differently*--so that certain 'forgotten' or 'displaced' moments can be uncovered. The therapeutic aspects of this enterprise have long been recognized by theorists of autobiography; however there are also political implications in this process of return and self-scrutiny. For non-aboriginal Canadians and Australians, going back to examine the past might mean determining and analyzing the ideological inheritances that have been settled upon the colonial site and which continue to inform and structure dominant social formations. For aboriginal peoples, looking back might function as a way of affirming cultural survival and facilitating political self-determination. Through the retrieval of cultural memory--a retrieval that has been necessitated by the eradication of languages, rituals, ceremonies, and practices by European colonizers--aboriginal peoples are formulating subject positions that speak to the needs of contemporary Native and Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Australia.

One extraordinary text provides a useful example of the function of the past in Australian Aboriginal autobiography. In *An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New*, Labumore (Elsie Roughsey) includes in her personal history a wealth of specific cultural knowledge that is in danger of being forgotten. She provides detailed information about healing ceremonies and methods, dietary laws, birthing practices, hunting techniques and other methods of obtaining "bush tucker," social taboos, funeral customs, and so on. While this detailing of cultural information could be understood in terms of the Aboriginal woman acting as "native informant," a subject position constructed and controlled by white ethnographers--"tell us what you are like and we will write it down" (Neuman, "Writing Other-wise")--it can also be understood as a politically important message passed on from "the old" generation to "the new." Labumore is insistent that her audience is not made up solely of white readers who are engaged in a process of anthropological information retrieval. She knows that many

contemporary Aboriginals are as ill-informed about traditional histories, practices, and ideologies as non-Aboriginal Australians are. Her autobiography is more than the documentary record of a vanishing people. It is more than a museum of lost knowledges. It is evidence of the continuing presence of the past in Aboriginal self-identification. The past has meaning not because it captures and re-presents lost experience, but because it informs the subject position of this contemporary Lardil woman. Labumore insists on the truth of the past, because the past is alive in the present moment, both for her and for other Aboriginal peoples. Cultural memory sustains a living, developing, changing culture.[17] And remembering can be seen as a radical political act. To go back, then, does not mean to regress. It means to engage in a process of critical analysis in order to effect social change in the present and the future.

In autobiographical writing, the trip back into the past almost always involves representing the child "I." That child "I" is, of course, not the autobiographer--either as she is or as she was--but the child "I" does represent a repository of knowledges, emotions, events, and ideas out of which the autobiographer as a subject is constituted. It can, therefore, be analyzed. It can also be located, for the complex interplay of personal and social factors that configure the autobiographical "I" is staged in the time and place of childhood. The child "I" is a crucial player in postcolonial autobiography, for it is this "I" who learns the lessons of imperialist discourse and how this discourse shapes both the place the "I" inhabits and the "I" itself. This mutual imbrication of place and subject is the focus of the two chapters that follow. In the next chapter, I look at the ways in which the fact of living embodied, physical, spatially-organized lives shapes subjectivities. It is the argument of this chapter that the body itself is a kind of place molded and marked by the mutual influence of internal psychic processes and external cultural discourses. The discourse of racism, as it informs the second world locations of Canada and Australia is an important aspect of this argument. The third chapter investigates in some detail the slippery notion of home and how symbolic ideas of

home, as these circulate within culture and position subjects, can be simultaneously both familiar and alienating. In both chapters, my focus is on how ideas of place inform autobiographical subjectivity, but my intention is neither to fix nor naturalize those ideas or those subjectivities; rather my approach is to call attention to the power relations embedded within various discourses of place and how subjects both internalize and resist them.

Notes

[1] In a later essay, "Contemporary Cultural Amnesia," Connerton argues that capitalist modes of production have altered the spaces--especially the built environment --in which human life is carried out. The consequence of this, suggests Connerton, is not only that the ways in which human beings occupy and use space changes--what he calls bodily practices--but also that cultural memory changes.

[2] Philip Shaw's "topo-analysis" of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is a notable exception.

[3] Lillian Hellman made up the pivotal chapter of *Pentimento* that concerns her relationship with Julia--a relationship that was popularized and, thus, given special poignancy and *authority* in a feature film. In Canada, the fabrications of Frederick Philip Grove and John Glassco have long been the focus of critical discussions of their autobiographies.

[4] To her credit, Egan does recognize the limits of her own theoretical model when she comes to study certain "new voices" in autobiography in her essay "Changing Faces of Heroism."

[5] This generalization must be immediately qualified by the recognition that some individual critical studies of autobiography do pay attention to specific material histories. Particularly important are those studies that investigate matters of gender and class. Exemplary in this respect are Regenia Gagnier's *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* and Felicity A. Nussbaum's *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England.* Significantly, both Gagnier and Nussbaum (as their titles reveal), limit their analyses of autobiography to very specific places and temporal periods. Neither makes any claims concerning the general or abstract (read: universal) properties of autobiographical subjectivity.

[6] Egan looks at Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, William Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, and George Moore's *Hail and Farewell*; Olney studies autobiographical writings by George Fox, Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill, Cardinal Newman, Montaigne, Carl Jung, and T.S. Eliot.

[7] Later in the text (190-201), and in the essay "Narrative and Chronology as Structures of Reference and the New Model Autobiographer" that I discussed above, Eakin does seem to insist that because of what he calls the "fundamental temporality of human experience" (*Touching* 193) and the embeddedness of consciousness in time-bound structures, the chronological arrangement of autobiography might be natural after all.

[8] Paul Smith has demonstrated just how broad-ranging and interdisciplinary this academic concern with understanding the subject as an ontological category is.

[9] The phrase is Lejeune's. He is referring to people who tell their life stories but may not necessarily write them down. These life narratives might be recorded by an amanuensis, or in other media such as video and film (see *On Autobiography* 185-215). Lejeune also brings to our attention the fact that thousands of ordinary people are writing their life stories. Sometimes this is encouraged by a teacher who hopes to encourage independent thinking and to teach writing skills; sometimes the life story is written as an act of psychotherapy. The current interest in life narratives written by incest and abuse survivors is an example of the latter (see *On Autobiography* 216-31) .

[10] In an earlier essay, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Spivak argues that "[n]o perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self" (253).

[11] Mary Louise Pratt also discusses this fixing and fetishizing of the native subject. Her argument is that narratives produced by colonial explorers and travellers regularly effaced a native presence by generalizing individual natives into a uniform "they" or iconic "he" and representing them in a timeless present where the native's actions and customs become fixed, typical, representative (63-64). In this way, explorer narratives functioned to normalize colonial authority and to deny indigenous people's political claims to territory.

[12] Hertha Dawn Wong presents an important challenge to Krupat and other critics who would insist that autobiography is not a Native form of self-expression. Wong argues that "long before Anglo ethnographers arrived in North America, indigenous peoples were telling, creating, and enacting their personal narratives through stories, pictographs, and performances" (3).

[13] A similar model has been described by Doris Sommer who posits the subject of Latin American women's *testimonios* as a "plural self." And Kateryna Olijnyk Longley distinguishes between the individualized subject of western autobiography and the aboriginal subject whose autobiographical writing is characterized by two distinctive features: "One is the sense of communal life that is evoked through the individual story, and the other is the intimate relationship with tribal land" ("Autobiographical Storytelling" 372).

[14] Paul Smith suggests that this kind of interrogation and critique has been mounted by feminism against patriarchy, and he offers the work of feminism as a model of how social change can be effected (see chapter 9).

[15] Stephen Slemon discusses the diversity of critical taxonomies that shelter under the rubric "postcolonial" in "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World." Slemon locates three main research fields that figure as postcolonial within English studies: first, what is the outgrowth of an earlier "Commonwealth"

literature which represents a liberalization of English studies to include geographical and national difference; second, critical inquiry into third and fourth world subjectivities as well as black, ethnic, and aboriginal subjectivities dispersed within first world space; and third, the specific analysis of the discourses of colonialism, as well as the contestatory and counter-discursive narratives produced by the formerly colonized (32). Another extremely useful and cogent summary of the debates around "postcolonialism" as a field of critical inquiry is Chris Tiffin's essay "The Voyage of the Good Ship 'Commonwealth'."

[16] In *Decolonising Fictions*, Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin suggest that the "post" in "postcolonial" marks "the lingering legacy of the imperial/colonial relation in all its positive and negative aspects" (13).

[17] In Kevin Gilbert's influential play *The Cherry Pickers*, two characters argue about the value and meaning of dancing a ceremonial Corroborree dance:

> TOMMLO: This dance isn't for the Corroborree Men either. It's for *us*, a People. It's for us *blacks* and our right to live!!
>
> ZEENA: This is wrong, Tommlo. We can't go back in time and change things!
>
> TOMMLO: We can't go back in time--but we can bring time back to us. Dance, dance!! Keep movin' or so help me Christ! (Act 3, scene 2, p. 63)

Staged here is the recognition that traditional practices and symbols cannot have the *same* meaning in the present as they had in the past but that understanding this does not render them meaningless. Indeed, the retrieval of cultural memory is presented in this play as a *precondition* of cultural growth.

Chapter Two

Bodies, Places, and Subjectivity

> Begin, though, not with a continent or a country or a house but with the geography closest in--the body.
>
> Adrienne Rich
> "Notes toward a Politics of Location"
> (212)

> The body is our most material site of potential homelessness.
>
> Sidonie Smith
> "Identity's Body" (267)

In postcolonial autobiography, going back to investigate the processes of subject formation means both analyzing the discourses that interpellate the subject and recuperating the materiality of the lived body. Although, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the specific relation between the "I" of autobiography and the real person in the world cannot be easily or unreflectingly assumed, it might be necessary to retain some notion that language cannot only refer to but transform reality as a crucial element in a politics of decolonization. Discourses do have real effects on real people, and if we are to challenge those discourses and change those effects, then one way might be to retain a notion of the real in literary writing. Shalini Puri argues, after the Caribbean writer Edouard Glissant, that such a commitment to a realist epistemology is especially important in postcolonial writing, for this is what marks the possibility of political resistance and creative social agency. As Puri puts it, "the struggle of a colonized people for subjectification" (96) relies on the ability of subjects not only to interrogate the ways in which colonial narratives have "de-realized" them but also to access a "deeper reality" which allows them to "real-ize themselves" (97). This "deeper reality" is an order of knowledge that subjects understand as more closely allied to their own

experiences than the particular "reality" that colonial discourse attempts to force its subjects to accept and mimetically reproduce as their own. Foundational to this argument is the assumption that if knowledge of the real is a problem, it is not necessarily an impossibility. Further, the real can be both created and expressed in language.

Such a notion of a politically viable real has also been debated in feminist criticism, especially as it relates to the human body, for the body seems to offer that guarantee of irreducible, material, concrete reality that would ground both knowledge and political action.[1] Some critics, such as Judith Butler, argue that the body is a site upon which cultural discourses are inscribed. It is mediated and marked as an object of culturally-specific power relations, and its identity, including gender identity, comes from its ability to enact particular, individual, sometimes transgressive performances.[2] Other critics argue that subjects are not free-floating effects of signification and linguistic play but are grounded in bodies that suffer the real effects of degradation and exploitation, as well as pleasure. These critics insist that resistance and liberation have no meaning if they are theorized only on a textual level, as what Teresa L. Ebert calls "semiotic activism" (15). The whole point of a liberatory politics is to end the real effects of oppression--hunger, rape, mutilation, torture, etc. Ebert argues that a notion of materiality--including bodies as material--must be factored back into radical discourses (such as feminism or postcolonialism) if they are to contribute to political projects that would lead to social change. Not an essentialized site of agency, the body is, nevertheless, an *actor* in the processes of subject formation, for the body is what Maria Mies has named a "struggle concept" (qtd. in Ebert 20) which can be interrogated, explained, and transformed. The body is partly biological, an assemblage of particular features--size, skin colour, physical features, age, etc. But these features are not simply natural but are made meaningful in relation to social discourses. Nevertheless, subjects experience these meanings of their bodies as lived effects. In order to change those

effects, argues Ebert, the specific meanings of specific bodies must be analyzed and interrogated, for through a theoretical engagement with and critique of the ways in which meanings are produced in culture, meanings can be changed.

It is the purpose of this chapter to argue that the body itself is a *place* of subjectification. It is a site of psychic habitation, in that the subject comes to understand itself as belonging to and being contained within a particular body. It is also a locus of power relations, in that particular bodies are sites where specific knowledges and perspectives are reproduced. Autobiography, because it promises a certain contractual connection to the real, to the materiality of lived experience, provides what is perhaps a unique opportunity to explore how subjects understand and represent their bodies as both real (i.e. experienced as a locus of certain physical processes and effects) and discursively-produced (i.e. experienced as a site of knowledge). In this chapter I look at the ways in which embodied subjects are represented in autobiography, and I do so partly to suggest that physicality is a significant constituent feature of the processes of subject formation and partly to explore the impact of particular spatial environments on embodied subjects. It is my contention that there is a mutual imbrication of the world on the subject and the subject on the world and that the point at which the two intersect is the body. But the body is not an irreducible essence or presence, a kind of ground zero of subjectivity. Rather, particular bodies are located within specific historical and spatial circumstances which produce different subjectivities. It is the cultural specificity of embodied subjectivity, as it is lived in postcolonial second world locations, that this chapter seeks to explore.

If, as Shirley Neuman argues, bodies have not figured prominently in the texts that comprise the western canon of autobiography, the same cannot be said of the postcolonial autobiographies studied here. Neuman explains that the "near-effacement of bodies in autobiography" is the consequence of a western philosophical and Christian tradition that posits a binary opposition between the body and the soul. Ideas of the

"self" in this tradition are consistently associated with the soul, and the body is repressed as the soul's degraded, impure container ("'An appearance'" 1-2). In many of the autobiographies produced by postcolonial writers, however, the body figures prominently. *Flaws in the Glass,* the autobiography of Patrick White, for instance, could be read as the story of a masculine body that, because it is also a "delicate" body and a homosexual body, figures inappropriately within the dominant social formation of Australia, a social formation that values virility and toughness and promotes a nationalist ideology of masculine mateship that is distinctly homophobic. White's text is structured around his search for a more accommodating space in which he can live the life his body desires and requires, a search that, ultimately, takes him out of Australia. The distorted body-image that is reflected and refracted by the flawed mirror, an image that is the central organizing trope of the autobiography, is a metaphor both of the difference the sickly, homosexual body presents and of the ways in which Australian society has distorted its own public image of White, prodigal son and Nobel Prize winner. David Malouf, as I will discuss in detail in this chapter, is also concerned with the history of his body and how it is either accommodated or alienated by particular events and places. In Malouf's autobiography, the ethnic body is a source of tension and anxiety. Aboriginal autobiographers are frequently preoccupied with the body, its appearance, behaviours, and appetites, as well as its social inscriptions under various kinds of colonial law, as I explain in my discussion of Jane Willis's *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* later in this chapter. And the Canadian poet bpNichol writes an autobiography that is fundamentally corporeal, articulating, as it does, the narrative of the "I" as it is understood through various body parts. In Nichol's text, *Selected Organs: Parts of an Autobiography*, autobiography becomes the occasion for a series of anecdotes of the body that describe how his body has acquired particular personal and social meanings throughout its history. Nichol's work posits the body as a readable text, an idea that fundamentally challenges the way autobiography has been traditionally understood. I

CANADIAN THESES

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LOCATING SUBJECTS: CONTEMPORARY ...

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could go on with other examples, but suffice it to say that in postcolonial autobiography, the body is frequently a place of ideological conflict and social struggle, and it signifies in specific ways in relation to specific places.

Specular Identification and the Production of an "I"

Although the body may not always be *figured* in autobiography, it is at the core of western psychoanalytic theories of the formation of the human subject. The originary point of the development of a concept of "I", is, especially according to Freudian theories, coincident with the embodiment of the subject. The history of the body begins at a moment that for most people is beyond conscious memory.[3] It begins in infancy, prior to the acquisition of language, prior to the influence of regulatory forces that engender the child's body and position him or her in relation to normative social structures, that is, prior to the Oedipal stage in the psychic development of the subject. Whether we fully accept Freudian explanations of human psychic processes or not, there can be little doubt that his theories--especially as they have been reread and reinvented by Jacques Lacan--have contributed greatly to the corpus of critical knowledge about the formation and function of the human subject. For the purposes of this study, Freud's basic insight that there is a significant relationship between the developing ego and the body is crucial, for it proposes the body as a primary site of self-identification, the body as the first significant *place* of the "I."[4]

Lacan's expansion of Freud's basic insight describes a specific moment when the infant recognizes the fact that it exists as a physical object in relation to other objects.[5] This recognition marks the beginning stages of the infant's ability to imagine itself as an "I," as a discrete entity, as a "self" separate from its mother. According to Lacan, this moment occurs at some time between the ages of six to eighteen months around an event he terms "the mirror stage." Upon seeing its own reflection in a mirror, the infant assumes an identificatory specular image, which Lacan calls the *imago* (*Écrits* 2). This

imago is received by the subject as a *Gestalt* of its own body. It manufactures for the subject a succession of fantasies that transform what had previously been experienced as a fragmented, amorphous body (the "body-in-bits-and-pieces") into an experience of totality--itself as a distinct entity. This image is an idealized image, in that it appears more coherent than the infant actually feels, but it marks the foundation of the ego-ideal. The mirror stage represents the infant's attempt to fill a perceived lack or absence with its own specular image. The mirror stage also, importantly, establishes a meaningful relation between the infant and its experiential external reality--between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* (*Écrits* 4). The mirror image represents "the threshold of the visible world" (*Écrits* 3). As Elizabeth Grosz (commenting on Lacan's theory) notes, prior to this moment, the infant has no sense of its own corporeal boundaries; at the mirror stage, it learns to locate itself in relation to other objects in the field and according to concepts of bodily orientation, distance, perspective, and position (Grosz *Jacques* 32). After the mirror stage, the child will attempt to fill absence in other ways: through the dialectic of the "self" and the (m)other and through the acquisition of language. But the mirror stage, significantly, represents that inaugural moment where "the specular image positions the child within a (perspectively organized) spatial field, and, more particularly, within the body, which is located as a central point within this field" (Grosz, *Jacques* 48). One of the many important contributions that psychoanalytic theory makes to our understanding of the processes of human subject formation, then, is this idea that the subject's perception of real and virtual space constitutes the experience of corporeal integrity and marks the origin of the ego's identity.

With the recognition of the concept of absence comes the infant's simultaneous recognition that "it is not 'one', complete in itself, merged with the world as a whole and the (m)other," but that it is *in* the world (Grosz, *Jacques* 35). That world is partly, though not solely, physical. However, because the infant's recognition of its specular image is at once an experience of the real--it perceives its own actual (if inverted)

reflection--and a *misrecognition*--the image represents a unity and a mastery that the infant still lacks--the world in which the infant is able to situate itself is a world that is experienced as mediated. The subject is not a unitary subject, according to Lacan, but a split subject, simultaneously coherent and divided from itself. It is, importantly, this split in the subject that explains the role of social processes in the formation and regulation of the human subject. The subject cannot ever fully compensate for its perceived lack through its identification with its own image; rather the subject is always "a subject of falsehood, unable to produce knowledge, a subject of ideology" (Grosz, *Jacques* 40). The mirror stage, in one sense, represents the origin of the infant's first process of social acculturation (as well as the origin of its sexual drives) (Grosz, *Jacques* 32). It marks the entry of the infant into a world ruled by language and law.[6]

Although Lacan's theorization of the mirror stage is suggestive, particularly if one is attentive to the role that corporeality and spatiality play in the shaping of the human subject, we can never really know what actually happens in the very early stages of subject formation. The infant cannot tell us; we can only theorize how the prelinguistic child comes to an awareness and understanding of itself as an "I." Nor can the language of autobiography recreate the psychic experience of infancy. The consciousness that interprets childhood is always that of the adult autobiographer: "In childhood," notes Carolyn Kay Steedman, "only the surroundings show, and nothing is explained. Children do not possess a social analysis of what is happening to them, or around them, so the landscape and the pictures it presents have to remain a background, taking on meaning later, from different circumstances" (28). Nevertheless, the language used to tell the story of childhood can provide partial access to some of the events, ideas, and experiences that have influenced and constituted a particular human subject. What the autobiographer chooses to represent is significant, for the particular arrangement of representations--their order, position, and relative prominence--suggests something about the determining features of the autobiographical "I." If the body

figures prominently in a particular autobiography, then, this is perhaps because the body functions, for the autobiographer, as a scene of important psychic investment. In some autobiographies the body is a particularly visible site around which specific meanings accumulate. The body generally figures, in these texts, as a site of certain kinds of trouble. Sometimes that trouble is sexual or racial; sometimes the trouble is illness, age, infirmity, disability, or abuse. Sidonie Smith argues that "the autobiographical subject carries a history of the body with her as she negotiates the autobiographical 'I,' for autobiographical practice is one of those cultural occasions when the history of the body intersects the deployment of subjectivity" (*Subjectivity* 22-23). If, as I wish to suggest, bodies can be understood as the first place of subjectification, then it matters what kind of body the "I" marks.

Particular Bodies: Gender and Race

Elizabeth Grosz correctly points out that since bodies are all different, and, thus, their specular images are different, the mirror stage and its consequent positioning of the subject in the world cannot be experienced by all subjects in the same way. Grosz insists that there is no such thing as "a human body" and "a human subject" but only *particular* bodies and *particular* subjects.[7] Thus, she defines the limits of Lacanian theory in its attempt to describe universally-applicable psychic processes and insists on a materialist understanding of the specific situation and designation of a particular subject within various social circumstances and discursive fields. The body itself is a place to be psychically occupied. Not simply a container of biological material and processes, it is an identificatory site. Traditionally, however, the body has been the object of study for the natural sciences, which have probed *only* its physicality. Matters of the mind and consciousness have been dealt with as if they were separate from matters of the corporeal. This, of course, is the inheritance of Cartesian dualism which posits the body as non-conceptual, but spatial, and the mind as conceptual, but non-

spatial (Grosz, "Notes" 5). In Grosz's view, this separation of mind from body represents an imbalance that must be corrected:

> The animation and *interiority* of the body, the fact that it is the point of origin of a *perspective* and that it occupies a conceptual, social and cultural point of view, cannot be explained on such a model [one that would regard the body as pure physical matter]. The corporeality of a subject *must* differ from the corporeality of a stone or of an animal insofar as the human body is capable of thinking and talking, is subjected to meanings, values, and decisions arising from *within*, while the latter are animated or subjected to meanings only externally. In other words, the *humanness* of the body, its *psychical* status, has been ignored. ("Notes" emphasis in the original 5)

The body is a kind of psychic home, but it is a home over which the individual does not have exclusive control. Rather, the body is marked by power relations. As a "material series of processes, power actively marks or brands bodies as social, inscribing them with the attributes of power" (Grosz, "Inscriptions" 63). Thus, theories of the subject must be able to account for both the materiality of bodies and how they are inscribed by culture. The particular features of specific bodies contribute to the constitution of specific subjectivities, *not* because subjects are inherently and irreducibly different from one another, but because bodies are *marked* differently by various socially-regulated discourses.

Women, as many feminist scholars note, have traditionally been defined by their bodies, by, that is, biological determinism. While the positive side of the Cartesian duality (mind, culture, self, subject) has been associated with masculinity, the negative side (body, nature, other, object) has been associated with femininity (Grosz, "Notes" 4). Grosz explains that because women's identities have been determined by their bodies--specifically in terms of their reproductive role--women have not been granted the same

access to subjecthood that men have enjoyed ("Notes" 5-6). Further, as Sidonie Smith argues, women's bodies have been used as an explanation of the contents and qualities of their minds. While the Medieval and Renaissance soul was--because of its very separateness from the body--considered unsexed, shifts in theological thinking in later periods produced a "feminine" soul, which was consistently associated with nature and the female body (*Subjectivity* 13). Although the discourses of gendered embodiment sought explanations in the "natural" and "essential" biological differences between men and women, these functioned as normalizing social ideologies and were, in effect, alibis for the uneven distribution of labour, resources, and social power.

Such biological explanations of subjectivity are even more evident if the particular bodies in question are not white. The coloured female body, associated as it is with brute matter, impulsive behaviour, sexual license, and savagery, is doubly marked as divergent from the normative white, male, universal subject. Race, according to nineteenth-century discourses of natural and social science--especially Social Darwinism and phrenology--was understood to be a biological fact, a fixed category that, "determined the shape and contour of thought and feeling as surely as it did the shape and contour of human anatomy" (Gates 3). As Kwame Anthony Appiah demonstrates in his essay "Racisms," such assumptions continue to inform racist discourse into the present day. Appiah distinguishes between *racialism*, the belief that different races have different discernible genetic and morphological characteristics, and *racism*, the belief that people of different races also differ morally and intellectually from each other. He further distinguishes between *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* racism. The extrinsic racist can be persuaded to change his or her mind about the supposed inferiority of the racial "other" given the appropriate evidence; the intrinsic racist, however, cannot be persuaded by any evidence, but holds fast to the belief that racial difference is itself sufficient reason to think of and treat people of "other" races differently. Whether extrinsic or intrinsic, however, racism is an ideology based on

false assumptions. It is dangerous precisely because it confuses and conflates physical, genetic characteristics with intellectual and moral ones, thus motivating some people to treat "other" human beings as inherently inferior. Thus, the identity of the racial "other" is reduced to the fact of his or her morphological features, reduced to what Frantz Fanon calls "the fact of blackness."

In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon reproduces a scene where a young white child sees him on a train platform and is afraid because of the colour of his skin. Fanon's interpretation of the scene makes it clear that this moment is a metonym linked to a range of complex psychic effects produced in the black man by a white person's fear and rejection of him. The black man experiences a feeling of being divorced from his own consciousness, an experience Fanon describes as an "amputation" (112). He becomes an object, even to himself. His individuality--his very subjecthood--is erased as he is turned into a signifier of a whole history of racial myth and stereotype:

> I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism [sic], racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'." (112)

The black man is completely defined by his skin: "I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (116). He is an object, a non-person, a body *reduced* to its skin: "the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema" (112).[8] His skin, then, is the signature of his identity, which is really a non-identity. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. contends that "[r]ace, as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences, has long been recognized to be a fiction. When we speak of 'the white race' or 'the black race,' the Jewish race' or 'the Aryan race,' we speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors" (4). But these metaphors, as Fanon demonstrates, are extremely

powerful. Indeed, they are internalized and lived *as if they were real*. They become the site of identification determined both from without and from within, the primary *place* of the non-white "I."

The colonized body is denied individuality; in fact, as noted in the previous chapter, colonial discourse denies heterogeneity within racial groups and produces the colonized body as representative of a recognizable type. Not surprisingly, colonial discourse frequently translates itself into a surveillance and administration of the colonized body. The colonial agent seizes on the body of the "other" as both the visible sign of difference and the signature of an alien and inferior identity. Overdetermined as it is, the non-white body becomes a primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse for both the colonizer and the colonized--the colonizer because of the disavowal of the "other" in the "self"; the colonized because of the internalization of the ideological statements of a fundamentally racist colonial discourse. The colonized body, then, is a site of ideological struggle, and it is important to investigate the ways in which particular bodies are represented in autobiographical writing. Within the terms of racist colonialist discourse, the non-white body *defines* subjectivity, and the body becomes the only place the subject is permitted to inhabit. As I explore in the next section, in Canada, a Native body is positioned in very particular ways in relation to a social formation that is, at base, colonial.

Inhabiting a Female Native Body: Jane Willis's *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood*

Born in 1940 on the island of "jisah-seebee" or Fort George, on the eastern shores of James Bay in northern Quebec, Jane Willis is the child of a Cree mother and a Scots father. At the time of her birth--and, indeed, until they were revoked in 1985 by Bill C-31--the Enfranchisement Act of 1869 and the Indian Act of 1876 dictated that if an Indian woman married a non-Indian man, she and any children produced by the union, lost their Indian status and their accompanying right to live on reserve land.[9]

Because her parents never married, Willis retained her Indian status. But this naming is more than a legal designation. Despite the fact that her light skin would allow her to "pass" for white, Willis identifies herself as "Indian." The statement "I am an Indian" occurs as the final line of the text, and, in the context of the life story narrated, it is not only a statement of pride and self-affirmation, but it is also an ironic recognition of what this naming has cost her.

For to be Indian in Canada in 1940--and still today--is to be designated as "other" in relation to the dominant European-descended white settler society and to be denied a position as an agent of one's own history. The "I" of Willis's autobiography, then, despite the persuasiveness of the text's claim to voice and full subjecthood (as implied by the simple copula "to be" in the statement "I am an Indian"), is the "I" of a colonized subject, a subject split by two worlds, two cultures. This is marked at the outset by the discontinuity between the name of the protagonist, Geniesh, and the name of the author as it appears on the copyright page, Jane Willis. This discontinuity violates Lejeune's "pacte autobiographique" and signals that for a colonized Native subject, writing autobiography--formulating an "I"--presents a unique difficulty.[10] One might speculate that the Native name appears in the title of the autobiography as a signal of its greater symbolic and personal value; however, there can be no denying that the life and the subjectivity inscribed in the text is also that of a woman who has been shaped by the extraordinary power of white colonial institutions. Indeed, it is white European culture that authorizes the production of the autobiography, given that autobiography is a European generic form and that white reading audiences, especially in the past two decades, have been hungry consumers of Native life stories.[11]

This autobiography is the story of a Native woman whose existence has been controlled and managed by the Canadian state, through its official representatives and allies: the Indian agent, the RCMP, the Hudson's Bay Company, the church and its priests and missionaries. The Canadian state has, for three hundred years, functioned as

a colonial administrative structure in its relations with Native peoples. In *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood*, it is clear what form colonial management takes: its central aim is to turn Indians into Canadians by eradicating all signs of Indianness and requiring Native people to assimilate into mainstream Canadian society. The easiest targets were the children. Catch them young and teach them to be what you want them to be. It was assumed that their Indianness could be--and should be--erased so that a new generation of assimilated Natives would think themselves part of mainstream Canadian society. Furthermore, it was hoped that these children would act as mediators between the state and older generations and that their education in white schools would function as a catalyst to more comprehensive integration. Official government policy dictated that Native children could be legally removed from their homes and families at the age of seven and put in residential schools (English-Currie 51).

The impact of this policy is of profound importance to Native peoples, for the consequences of the residential school experience have been devastating and long-lived. Children were separated from their families for ten months of the year. They were forced to speak English and were punished for speaking their own languages. They were frequent victims of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. Individual experiences vary, but in general terms, the residential school experience meant that Native people lost or learned to devalue their own cultural knowledge, including their own languages; they were emotionally scarred by being separated from parents and the positive role models they represented; they were segregated from their communities, and especially elders who functioned as teachers; and they were academically disadvantaged since residential school education placed more emphasis on the teaching of domestic and technical skills than academic subjects. Although some important studies written by white academics exist,[12] it is now recognized that those best equipped to recount the history of residential schools in Canada are Native people themselves. Blackfoot academic Vicki English-Currie argues that the profoundly negative impact of the

residential school system on Native peoples must be openly acknowledged and evaluated in conjunction with the development of education programs designed to prepare Native people to take a significant place in contemporary Canadian society. Partly this means collecting and publishing first-hand accounts of residential school experience and the impact it has had on the lives of individuals, families, and communities. More of these stories are now available. For instance, a recent case study of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* by Celia Haig-Brown, specifically incorporates the transcribed words of former residents whom the author interviewed during her research. The story of Grace in Lynda Shorten's *Without Reserve: Stories from Urban Natives* revolves around an elderly woman's memories of the Blue Quills Residential School in Alberta. And Basil H. Johnston's autobiography, *Indian School Days,* focuses on his time at St. Peter Claver's Indian Residential School in Spanish, Ontario. The very word "Spanish," comes to signify for Johnston "penitentiary, reformatory, exile, dungeon, whippings, kicks, slaps, all rolled into one" (6), meanings that many Native people would recognize.

Although their skin colour could never be changed, it was assumed that everything else about Native children could be molded to fit the dominant society's image of acceptable Canadian citizens. Thus, the aim of the colonial authorities was to create what Homi K. Bhabha has called "mimic" subjects: "a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" ("Of Mimicry" 126). Willis's autobiography records some of the ways in which this official ideology of assimilation was carried out in material practices; it also speaks of the effect these practices had on how she felt and thought both about herself and about her own people.

Barbara Godard contends that representations of Native women in dominant, Euro-Canadian literary texts have traditionally fallen into two types: "the Princess" and "the Squaw." While "the Princess" was positively associated with Nature and the land,

"the Squaw" was the "dark side of the Mother-Queen, the witch-healer medicine woman, the seductive whore, the drunken, stupid, thieving Native[]" (189). She was the "despised object of conquest" (189). In part, it is against these two stereotypical representations that contemporary Native women writers struggle in their own writing. But their bid for dignity and power will not be achieved through a simple reversal of these oppressive stereotypes.[13] Rather, as Godard continues, through

> struggle, acquiring some of the strategies and structures of the dominant, the subaltern rises "into hegemony," this process constituting a *dis/placement* of the dominant discourse and strategies of hybridization that undermine its monolithic position of power. Both speaking marginality and speaking against it, exploiting the ambiguity of their within/without position with respect to power, these emerging subjects destabilize institutional practices. (193 emphasis in the original)

The Native woman writer, then, speaks in contra/diction: she uses the strategies of power--including literary genres--for her own political ends. But it is only through a double-speaking, as insider and outsider, that she can establish her own subject position. Unable to divorce herself from the full implications of being constructed as a colonized subject, she writes her subjugation. But she situates herself both historically, in relation to institutional forces, and personally in relation to her own particular lived experience, as a way of understanding her oppression and, through understanding, weakening its ability to completely define her.

This, I would suggest, is the strategy employed by Jane Willis. While she must represent herself as a colonized subject under the absolute authority of the colonizer--"From now on I was completely at [their] mercy, to do with as [they] pleased" (39)--she gains at least some hold of the ability to represent herself. Partly this is achieved through the manipulation of language and tone. Dispersed throughout the text are fragments of dialogue between the narrator and her relatives that are written in a Cree

language. These fragments are not translated into English either within the text itself or through the addition of a glossary. Most of the time, the non-Cree-speaking reader can work out their meaning in relation to the context of the utterance or by the narrator's response to what is said; nevertheless, the non-Cree-speaking reader--like the non-Native characters in the text--is never completely invited into the exchanges between family members. Thus, to some extent at least, the non-Cree-speaking reader is positioned as outsider, someone who is not privy to all of the information about the narrator's life that the text presents.

In addition, the language of the text is, at times, distinctly parodic. The specific target of the parody is a range of related statements that stand in for all of the spoken and unspoken assumptions and ideologies of colonial discourse. These statements are uttered by the narrator herself, but they are obviously repetitions of what she has heard said *about* her. Thus, when she says that her behaviour is "unbefitting a stoical, unemotional, expressionless Indian child" (27), or says that she felt like "the low man on the totem pole" (88), or refers to herself as "just one of the crowd of little savages who had to be saved and anglicized" (74) she is appropriating a language that has oppressed her through its very ability to represent her in specific ways. When the narrator uses this language the effect is jarring, but while this linguistic strategy lays bare the stereotypical assumptions of the white oppressor--since these words are more easily placed in the mouths of an Indian agent, a teacher, or a minister--the very fact that the narrator utters them makes it clear that this is a language that is available to her. In a very real sense, she is supposed to use this language *and* believe in it, for this is precisely what colonial administration is trying to teach her. She is required to turn herself into its subject by using its language when thinking and speaking about herself.

It is not so easy to resist either the words or the actions of the colonizer by upturning them through parody, for both words and actions have *real* power over the narrator. They produce real effects. And so when it comes to representing what some

of those effects have been, Willis must detail the small and daily oppressions that have resulted from living as a ward of the government. In writing about how she has been treated by the institutions that controlled not only the shape of her days but also of her future--The St. Philip's Indian and Eskimo Anglican Residential School of Fort George, Quebec and the Shingwauk Indian Residential School of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario--Willis structures her narrative around the site of her body, for it is her body that provides the first target of colonial administrative control. It is her body--her skin--that is the visible sign of her difference. Furthermore, it is through acting on her body that colonial authority ultimately hopes to convert her mind and her soul.

Unaware of the conditions endured by other student residents, at first the narrator longs to live at the residential school. But on the day she is finally handed over by her reluctant grandparents and mother to Miss Moore, "the female-wrestler supervisor" (37), she quickly learns that school is something more than a new adventure. In her excitement and eagerness to be accepted, we can assume that she has taken as much care over her appearance on this day as described on a previous occasion when she had been unsuccessful in securing board at the school. She presents herself, then, before her teachers in a new dress, her hair clean and carefully combed and braided, her body freshly scrubbed. However, the first thing that is required of her is that she submit to being bathed in scalding water and having her hair and scalp doused with kerosene. Because "common knowledge" states that all Indians are dirty and louse-ridden, the teacher denies what she *sees*--a young girl who is not only careful and proud of her appearance but whose personal hygiene is also scrupulously overseen by her doting grandmother--and acts, instead, according to what she *believes*, which is that all Indians are "dirty savages." The colonized non-white body, as many scholars have documented, has been subjected to all sorts of physical and biological investigation, but racist colonial discourse is not concerned with the empirical body. Rather, colonial discourse produces the colonized body as its own object of scrutiny and regulation through a

complex process of fixing and fetishizing stereotypes. The colonized body is always already inferior, degenerate, abnormal. It cannot be otherwise. And, as Appiah suggests, this kind of intrinsic racism cannot be defeated by any amount of evidence.

The school authorities are obsessive about cleanliness. Not only is the external bathing and delousing a ritual event when a new child comes to live at the school (and a scene that is repeated in many autobiographies written by both Canadian Native and Australian Aboriginal writers[14]), but the children at St. Philip's are also subject to various other kinds of bodily regulation. The girls are all required to cut their hair short in the same page-boy style;[15] they are made to sleep in unheated dormitories with the windows wide open, even in winter; they are made to wash six times a day and even brush their teeth with Lifebuoy soap; and they are regularly dosed with laxatives: "Our insides too had to be sterilized, just like our bodies" (44). Their physical lives are strictly controlled by a series of rules. They are told when to sleep and when to wake. They are told when they can go to the toilet and when they cannot. They are fed the same food--some of it rotten and never enough of it ("Our one cup of food at every meal was just not enough for growing children and we were constantly hungry" [81])--at the same time every day, with variations only on special occasions such as Christmas. They are even told when they are sick and when they are not. On two occasions, students at the school fall ill. Annie has a tape worm, which she refuses to acknowledge for fear that it will prove what official opinion of her already seems to be. Earlier, when she had developed an allergic reaction to the Lifebuoy soap, Annie gets this response from Miss Moore: "'You dirty little Indian! If you weren't so dirty, you wouldn't have this problem'" (86). Another girl, Ellen, falls seriously ill, but her condition goes untreated because the teachers, assuming that she is naturally lazy, think that she is faking to avoid work. Ellen dies.

The narrator's own body, represented as a sick or potentially sick body, plays a complex role in *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood*. First, it provides the narrator with an

opportunity to compare and contrast her grandmother's traditional home-made remedies with "white man's medicine." When she is ill as a young child, the narrator tries to run away from both kinds of treatment, her grandmother's goose fat concoctions and the white nurse's needle. Each remedy seems equally repugnant, but neither is judged more effective than the other. Her grandmother too seems to believe that a combination of treatments--or perhaps the power of the double whammy--is desirable. By contrast, when the narrator enters the residential school, and her body falls under the exclusive care and control of the school authorities, only western treatments and medicines are valued. Indeed, the discourses of degeneracy and savagery that underpin the attitudes and practices of the school administrators dictate that Indian people themselves are the source of germs and disease. So used to being told that they are filthy, the girls believe that if a white person gets sick they are somehow to blame (49). And when a flu epidemic hits the village, the school principal refuses to allow the narrator to visit her dying grandfather for fear that she will bring the virus into the school and infect others. Because many school residents--teachers and students--are already infected, his logic is insupportable.

Curiously, the narrator maintains a fantasy about illness. She dreams of contracting Tuberculosis. Seemingly unaware of the historical legacy of TB, a disease first brought to the Americas by European settlers and which, because they lacked immunity to the disease, devastated Native populations, the narrator wants to be diagnosed as tubercular so that she will be sent to the sanitarium. She regards TB as her "big ambition" (93), but it is an ambition motivated by curiosity about the world beyond their island, the world outside. She has been told things about the "white man's world" all her life, and the only way to get there, it seems, is to get sent to the sanitarium. The narrator wants the illness but without the symptoms:

> "I don't want to get sick. I just want to get TB," I would explain patiently. The children who returned from the sanitarium were always

> telling us about all the good movies they saw, all the juice they drank, and all the good food and fruit they ate. All they did was lie around all day eating good food. (94)

To a young girl who is chronically underfed and overworked, such stories of luxury foods and ease are understandably desirable. Yet to desire a tubercular body in order to attain these luxuries is, ironically, to desire what had actually meant thousands of Native deaths. This fantasy, then, functions not only to characterize the narrator as a naïve child, but also to evoke the legacy of European settlement and its deadly consequences. It also reveals a stubborn refusal of white Canadians to acknowledge that they are the source of certain "Native problems," not the solution.

Convinced as they are of the accuracy of the stereotypical image of the "dirty savage," the figures of colonial authority in this autobiography consistently link a perceived lack of corporeal cleanliness with a range of other degeneracies, including natural laziness and promiscuity. In retrospect, the narrator can see the perverse logic of the colonizer's mentality:

> The school's and church's main objective was to educate the *savage* out of us and turn us into little paragons of virtue like the white people on the island. To make their job easier, we had to be willing to forget everything that we had learned at home and start out with a fresh, clean mind, one that was not cluttered with a lot of useless garbage. (59)

But the manifestations of this logic, as it informs a range of dictums and rules, are often absurd. For instance, the narrator and the other girls are repeatedly told that if they do not work hard and uncomplainingly at the school the fate that awaits them is that they will be condemned to a life of perpetual pregnancy, prey to the lusts of drunken and abusive men. The narrator is repeatedly warned--even at age seven--not to speak to boys, because "boys are after one thing only" (47). By the time she is a teenager at high school, the narrator is fairly regularly being accused of trying to attract boys and of

behaving promiscuously. But the truth is that the narrator and the other students are sexual innocents. At age seven, the narrator has no idea what the "thing" boys want is, and because she doesn't receive any instruction in even the basic facts of human sexuality and reproduction until her high school health class, she remains largely in a state of ignorance. In fact, puberty and its accompanying physical and emotional changes is a fact repressed by the school administrators to the point of denial. The narrator develops a painful abscess caused by the coarse material of her school uniform rubbing against her growing breasts. Because girls under the age of fifteen are not permitted to have breasts, she is not issued a bra.

When the narrator goes to Sault Ste. Marie to attend high school, other girls try to modernize her appearance by urging her to wear tight clothing, to shave her legs and leave them bare, and to pluck her eyebrows. But being so used to denying her body, to covering it up, the narrator feels ashamed and exposed. She has learned to alienate herself from her own limbs, to repress and be afraid of her own corporeality (not to mention her sexuality), to be ashamed of the sign of her skin. Her body, she believes, is a thing that can act on its own and betray her, a thing that has to be kept under tight control. Her body *is* her identity, in that colonial discourse reduces her to the corporeal, defines her in relation to her physicality. It is also, apparently, her fate in that she is told that she is inevitably and naturally prone to alcoholism, unwanted pregnancy, disease, and physical abuse. After living for years under a colonial administration that has shaped her relationship with her body by maintaining it as the focus of its regimentation and surveillance, the narrator comes to believe that her body *defines* who she is.

This narrative of "an Indian girlhood" is a narrative about being removed from home. It is about being removed from the Native settlement and being required to live in educational institutions that closely resemble what Foucault calls "spaces of exclusion" (*Discipline and Punish* 199). In these carceral spaces, all traces of the narrator's individuality are removed: she wears the standard uniform; she has her hair

shorn; she is issued a number; her every movement is closely monitored. Similarly, all traces of her Indianness are removed. But this is also a narrative about the narrator leaving her own Indian body as home. She internalizes and normalizes the western binary between the corporeal and the spiritual, and she works hard to repress her body. Her body, in a sense, no longer houses her "self" but is something separate from it. The effect is analogous to her experience of returning to her mother's home after a two-year absence. Shocked to realize how poor and ramshackle the cabin is, the narrator finds it difficult to overcome her feelings of discomfort and shame. Because she has learned and internalized a colonial perspective, she rejects her mother's house as uninhabitable. In a similar way, her own body becomes uninhabitable.

The narrator's statement that "[o]ur insides too had to be sterilized, just like our bodies" (44) has a double meaning. While it literally means that the school authorities hope to bring about organic purity in their charges, it also means that they wanted to bleach the Indian out of them. Ultimately, the aim of the Canadian state, is to render the Native body what Foucault calls a "docile body" (*Discipline and Punish* 138) Such a body can be made to behave and, ultimately, to think in ways that the dominant political structure authorizes. As Foucault makes clear, the body of the colonized or the incarcerated is the focus of institutional regulations, but it is only an intermediary. What authoritative institutions are actually after is control of the mind and the soul. It is not simply that the colonial system, as it is represented by the residential school workers, ministers, and the Indian Agent, exercise complete and absolute authority over Native children. These children were certainly subject to a good deal of coercion and harsh discipline, but they were not slaves. Rather, what the residential school as a colonial institution succeeded in doing was to teach a whole generation of Native children to turn themselves into subjects of the Canadian state--although never, of course, full subjects with all of the rights and entitlements of white Canadians. The devastating

consequences for Native peoples are that their own bodies, their own homes, their own places, their own people, become alien and undesirable.

This is the discursive context of Jane Willis's autobiography. This is the *place* that she knows. Indians did not disappear (either by integrating or by dying) but continued to survive, and, therefore, had to be contained and managed by a European settler society intent on maintaining its control over power and resources. Managing them is, of course, greatly facilitated by separating them from each other, by taking children away from their families and communities. It is also achieved through isolating them in schools, hospitals, prisons, and on reserves. Until very recently, the majority of European-descended Canadians have been happy to adopt an of "out of sight; out of mind" attitude to Native peoples. As long as they remained *out there*--on reserves, on skid row, in prisons, up North--they were not a problem, or at least they were someone else's problem. They were the business of the state, the concern of Indian agents, health care and social workers, teachers and missionaries. But autobiographical texts such as Willis's *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* and Basil H. Johnston's *Indian School Days* bring these lives and these experiences into the public eye. Recently, these stories have also found their way into the popular media. The CBC drama series *North of 60* and the CBC film *Where the Spirit Lives* are two recent examples of television programs that have dealt with the topic of residential schools and their devastating legacy.

Published in 1973, *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* can be seen as part of a body of Native literature characterized as "protest literature."[16] Its claim to tell a different history, a different truth; its indictment of white Canadian society (even if this is often couched in the language of parody and humour); its documentation of abuse, mistreatment, and misunderstanding--all contribute to a reading that would tempt one to describe the "I" of the text as a resisting subject.

> For twelve years I was brainwashed into believing that "Indian" was synonymous with "sub-human", "savage", "idiot", and "worthless". It

> took almost that long for me to regain my self-respect, to feel whole once again. Now I can, once again, say with pride, "I am an Indian". (199)

These are the final words of the text. But what status does this "I" have? What did the process of becoming "whole" entail? What changed in the second twelve-year period to give the narrator back her pride? Partly, of course, what changed was the increasing politicization of Native peoples and their organization into resistance groups, but we don't know from her autobiography if Willis was active in Native politics. We do know that she quit high school, married, and had children. But this part of her life is only sketchily and hastily covered. *Geniesh* is focused on childhood, a childhood that is always already inscribed and managed by colonialism, racism, and sexism. It is a story of an Indian girl learning what her place within the context of the Canadian state will be. It is a story of how her place was determined by the fact of her Native body, her Native skin. It is *not* a story of how that child found her way into fully achieved subjecthood.

As a young girl I was hooked on a series of books about a group of girls who lived at an English boarding school. The girls at Mallory Towers were always orchestrating adventures, and their lives seemed exciting to me, freer, more independent than mine. Even the uniforms seemed attractive. They were tribal costumes, signs of status and belonging. And so I can understand Geniesh's initial excitement at the idea of boarding at the residential school. At least at first glance. But her boarding school and mine couldn't have been more different. While I am writing this section on her experiences and the hard lessons she learned--that she and everyone like her was considered dirty, stupid, degenerate, savage--I realize that I have no way of really understanding. I don't know how it feels to be removed from my home and family and shut up in an institution; I cannot begin to conceive of what it must be like to be punished for speaking my mother tongue; I don't know what it means to have everything that I know to be familiar and normal--from the food that I eat to the stories that my mother tells me--denigrated; I

have no idea how it feels to be despised by a whole group of people who have absolute control over me; and I can't imagine the burden of being held responsible for everyone of my race. In my English primary school I was teased because of my German mother. The kids sometimes called me "kraut" and taunted me with Hitler salutes. But I was not hated. I have never been hated. And I have never been told that I was stupid, born to be a failure, destined for a life of abuse and misery.

I cannot identify with Geniesh. But I can listen to her story and I can try to hear her. Nevertheless, I bring a certain reading context to this autobiography, and I use a certain critical language to talk about it. How could I not? This is my language, part of who I am. It did not originate with me; rather, it is a syncretic mix of many languages, many utterances that I have taken up--sometimes unwittingly, sometimes selectively--as my own. I cannot pretend that I don't know this language any more than I can pretend that I do know Geniesh's life. Do I distort the text by "doing theory" to it? Is my writing another manifestation of colonialism--exerting my authority as reader and interpreter over the textual artifact and the person who produced it? Do I contain and control this "life" once again through my acts of reading and interpretation? I don't know. But I do know that I have to engage with this text. Not just because it fits my own theory about autobiography--that the body is an important site of located subjectivity--but because this autobiography made me think carefully about what it means to occupy certain bodies in certain locations. This text made me think about the ways in which skin itself is a place within which to live.

I have read *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* through the model provided by the field of colonial discourse analysis, and I have argued that this discourse produces the Native female body as a specific kind of *place* that functions as an important site of subjectification. I have argued that colonial discourse requires that this body be managed through the conflation of skin and identity and the restriction of the body's

movements. Only certain places within the social formation of Canada are available to the narrator: she can inhabit a state-controlled institution or a rough Native cabin on a reserve, but she can never occupy the white minister's house as anything other than a servant. Willis's autobiography demonstrates a desire both to reveal the physical and psychic violence of Canadian colonialism and to take back control of her subjectivity from those who would oppress her. But the lessons our bodies learn in childhood are not so easily cast off. Bodies have memories. And Geniesh can never shed her skin or the way it signifies in Canadian culture. As Métis writer Marilyn Dumont puts it in her poem "Memoirs of a Really Good Brown Girl," "my skin always gives me away."

"the geography of the body's hot experience": David Malouf's *12 Edmonstone Street*

In *12 Edmonstone Street*, David Malouf suggests that the relationship between his body and the places he has inhabited (however briefly) is a reciprocal one. Just as the physical environment and the discourses that inform it shape his perception his "self," so too his body--and others' bodies--leave indelible imprints on particular places. The skin is a border between inside and outside, but that border, Malouf suggests, is permeable. Messages transgress it. The permeability of borders--between time and space, between the body and particular environments, between the physical life and the life of the imagination, between people of different cultures--is the main focus of the autobiography. For Malouf, places are saturated with both affect and meaning. They are repositories of knowledge. And these associations are experienced both corporeally --as body memories--and imaginatively--as memories *of* the body.

In the sense that Malouf is concerned with the cognitive apprehension of significant objects and places, *12 Edmonstone Street* would seem to lend itself to a phenomenological reading. Phenomenology explores the ways in which things are infused with meaning through acts of consciousness. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston

Bachelard investigates the relationship between spatiality, the body, and the mind, and suggests that messages cross the corporeal boundary and are experienced internally in poetic terms. His interest is in topophilia;[17] his investigations "seek to determine the human value of the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love" (xxxi). Space is lived through the imagination, argues Bachelard; it becomes meaningful only because of our mental apprehension of it and our imaginative involvement with it. The particular spaces Bachelard explores are those that are most closely associated with the personal, and, in particular, with the experience of the body. The house, the nest, the shell, each functions as a container of the psyche; each offers a metaphoric representation of spatial forms *and* psychic events. "Not only our memories, but the things we have forgotten are 'housed.' Our soul is an abode. And by remembering 'houses' and 'rooms,' we learn to 'abide' within ourselves" (xxxii). We recreate our homes in memory and in language, says Bachelard, as a way of regaining and resecuring "a great image of lost intimacy" (100).

Seductive as phenomenology is--especially Bachelard's version of phenomenology which deals solely with the positive apprehension of particular spaces--a purely phenomenological interpretation of autobiography is problematic. Phenomenology posits a knowing subject prior to social determination, and its goal is to explain and secure the full presence of the self. It believes in the human subject's ability to directly apprehend experience, and, through the interaction of imagination and language, to create knowledge about the world. However this concept of a transcendental, knowing subject can no longer be credited. Further, phenomenology is concerned with the pure essences of things, their universality (Eagleton 55), and is, thus, based on assumptions that a postcolonial reading must critique. Bachelard's own analysis of spatiality, for instance, is heavily inflected by the ideologies and forms of western culture. The house of which he speaks is a recognizably western European house--with its garret, cellar, attic and ramparts--and its value is determined by the

discourses of western capitalism and bourgeois individualism. The house is private property, and the human subject with which it is associated is similarly private and individualized, the origin of unique meaning.

Nevertheless, as critics such as Elizabeth Grosz and (in her early work) Judith Butler have argued, phenomenology and more contemporary theories of the subject still have something to say to one another. Butler finds a useful connection between feminist critiques of biological determinism and phenomenology's investigations of "the *meaning* that embodied existence assumes in the context of lived experience" ("Performative" 520). And Grosz, following up certain insights of Merleau-Ponty, argues that psychoanalytic theories of subjectification and phenomenological theories are not necessarily at odds in that both are concerned with the developing subject's definition of a "self" through spatial relations. In particular, the subject's relation to its own body, notes Grosz, is fundamentally spatial in that it is regulated by concepts of centricity, size, direction, orientation, etc. "These are not conceptual impositions onto space, but our ways of living as bodies in space" ("Space, Time and Bodies"). Further, it is these features which constitute the subject's perspective and determine its apprehension of itself as a body in space occupying particular positions in relation to other bodies, other objects. In autobiographical narratives, obviously, the subject's position in relation to certain spaces cannot be experienced in any unmediated way; nevertheless, the language associated with particular places gives some clue as to the subject's perspective in relation to them.

Malouf's autobiography presents a narrator consciously examining the meaningful places of his life. It is a text, in Bachelard's terms, that investigates how the "I" has been and continues to be 'psychically housed'. *12 Edmonstone Street* begins where most autobiographies do, at the scene of childhood, and, in particular, with the evocation of the South Brisbane house that was the narrator's childhood home. That house no longer exists. It has been torn down as part of a familiar, and often regrettable,

process of urban renewal; but, of course, the house always exists in memory, and it functions as a kind of primal scene of subject formation. Malouf's description of the house at 12 Edmonstone Street is extraordinarily and beautifully detailed. But his representation of the house goes beyond nostalgic retrospection; it represents an articulation of his own personal "spatial history," to use Paul Carter's phrase.

The affinity between Carter and Malouf is made explicit in a radio broadcast in which the two writers discuss Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay*. Both are interested in the ways in which language creates places, how language maps and names what is otherwise not there. In Malouf's interpretation, Carter's thesis is that "the medium through which we finally understand things and make them available to ourselves as areas of action is language itself--the articulating of spaces is what allows us to move" (Carter, "Spatial" 173). And it is clear that in his own writing--much of which, as many critics have noted, is autobiographical--Malouf is concerned with the ways in which subjectivity is a matter of finding the correct language by which to name one's own location in the world. But this is not so much a process of recovering a preexisting connection as it is of making certain connections through language. Read in these terms, then, *12 Edmonstone Street* represents a writer's attempt to bring the "I" into being not by documenting how the child became the adult because of a certain set of influences and causal relations, but by constructing a temporal and spatial history--always partial and contingent--within which the "I" can be said to exist. Carter notes how crucial the issue of place is in Malouf's text:

> Well, in your book *12 Edmonston* [sic] *Street*, there's clearly a very interesting sense in which the *place* constructs the *person*, but the place is not there before the writing of it. In other words, if I'm interpreting it properly, the process of recollecting what is there occurs precisely through the writing of a place. Only when one has that *writing place* has one got the autobiographical experience. The autobiographical

> experience isn't conjured up by going back, in a tourist way, to look at the verandah, the underpinnings of the house: it emerges in the writing of those places, their transformation, into, literally, memory places. (Carter, "Spatial" 179)

Indeed, the autobiographer does not go back "in a tourist way" because tourists deal primarily in the foreign, whereas the autobiographer is intimately, emotionally, psychically, and physically connected to the places of his past.

In his essay "A First Place: The Mapping of a World," Malouf goes so far as to suggest that particular details of familiar topography might shape the psyche in particular ways. Details of urban design, architectural and natural features, communications and transportation systems, all of these elements, says Malouf, have an impact on human subjectivity:

> What I mean to ask here is how far growing up in the kind of house I have been describing may determine, in a very particular way, not only habits of life or habits of mind but the very shape of the psyche as Brisbane people conceive it, may determine, that is, how they visualize and embody such concepts as consciousness and the unconscious, public and private areas of experience, controlled areas and those that are pressingly uncontrollable or just within control--and to speak now of my own particular interest, how far these precise and local actualizations may be available to the writer in dealing with the inner lives of people. (9)

Most prominent of all is the house, for "[t]he house is a field of dense affinities, laid down, each one, with an almost physical power, in the life we share with all that in being 'familiar' has become essential to us, inseparable from what we are. We are drawn back magically, magnetically, to our own sticky fingerprints" (9). In his autobiography, Malouf searches for the places his fingers have touched, and the body is both marked by

place and a marker of place. It is the interpenetration of the environmental and the corporeal, and the impact of this mutual influence on the shaping of the "I," that is the core of the narrative. The "first place" that is the Brisbane house on Edmonstone Street is key because it is here that the narrator learns his inaugural lessons about the world and his position within it. It is here that his perspective is developed. It is here that he learns that places are never just *there* in a simplistic way, but are infused with cultural, familial, and personal meanings.

One of the most memorable and significant of places is the space under the house. In part, this space is special because it is a unique feature of Brisbane architecture. Some houses are built on stumps so that they stand level on the hills that are characteristic of the city, making a space underneath the floorboards that is big enough for a child to crawl into and inhabit as his own. This space is not exactly another room, but an extension of the house. For the narrator, under the house is known *through* the body, by "the time it takes, on hands and knees, to crawl from your father's toolshed to the place, far up under the Front Verandah, where the floorboards are so close to the earth that you can barely squeeze in" (43). It is "a place whose dimensions are measured, not in ordinary feet and inches, but in heartbeats, or the number of seconds you can endure the sticky-soft lash of cobwebs against your mouth, or the weight of your body, at kneecap and palm, on crunchy cinders" (46). Like the verandah, under the house is a liminal zone--not quite inside and not totally outside, both domesticated and wild. As Malouf describes it in "A First Place," it is a space of transgression, a place that is both desirable in that it promises freedom from conventions and the fixity of family habits, and potentially dangerous in that it is a dark, unknown territory filled with strange, rejected household objects. Under the house is the place in which children explore their own and others' bodies. It is also the place where animals, heeding their own bodily functions--sickness and birth--find shelter. This space, then, recreated in the autobiography, is a space of corporeal memory.

Other places in the house are the sites where bodies themselves come to be intimately known. In "the Bathroom" (Malouf's capitalization of significant place names marks their symbolic importance), the body is closely scrutinized in mirrors, undressed and touched, anointed with soaps and perfumes or medicines. The narrator remarks that the body that enters the Bathroom is a social "invention" (56), shaped by culturally-determined ideologies and norms. Some of these have to do with conventions of physical beauty and fashion or the physical work that bodies are or are not required to perform. Twentieth-century bodies are dieted, plucked, shaved, deodorized, and less likely to be rough-skinned or scarred than earlier bodies. Appropriately, the room that is the body's special place, the Bathroom, is analogous to a "secular shrine" (57), a place where the body is loved, perhaps even worshipped. The narrator remarks that his particular remembered Bathroom is a purely functional place of "brutal plumbing" and "dour austerity" (58). But, despite his denial of the Bathroom's erotic possibilities and his claim that it was not a place where bodies were pampered or lovingly touched and looked at, there is a significant connection between the Bathroom, the body, and desire. For it is through his experience of the Bathroom that the narrator learns of forbidden objects and forbidden acts. He studies the medicines in the upper cupboard that is off-limits to children. He reads the sex manuals that warn women of the consequences of engaging in deviant sexual relations which he finds in a cupboard in the passageway between the Bathroom and the lavatory. And he scrutinizes his own naked body in the mirror, looking, no doubt, for signs of his own deformity and evidence of his mother's guilt. When he is discovered naked before the mirror, he is punished, for nakedness for curiosity's sake alone is not allowed. The Bathroom, then, represents a place of "household gods," one of them, of course, the god of cleanliness. But it is also a place of taboos. It is at once a private place and a place where nothing is private, where everything could be exposed.

The connections between the body and the house can be most intimate. The Side Door, says the narrator, "'spoke to my blood'" (51), for it is the key to this door that was routinely used to staunch the flow of his blood during regular nosebleeds. Other parts of the house have been permanently altered by the imprint of other bodies. In one memory, the invasion of the narrator's house by "Our Burglar" fascinates, for the burglar breaches all of the codes the narrator has so dutifully learned. He breaks in by the same Side Door with which the narrator feels so intimately, physically, connected, the door he thinks of as "My Door," and the Burglar enters the parent's bedroom and the Front Room, places that are off-limits to the narrator. Most fascinating of all, the Burglar seems to know their house as well as he does himself. The Burglar, then, becomes part of the house and the narrator feels a close affinity with him. In another memory, a young woman becomes permanently associated with the house, in particular, with a specific space. She falls in front of their house and is temporarily sheltered and comforted by his mother on the Verandah. Her presence then remains like a shadow, a stubborn, lingering impression that haunts the narrator's memory of the house. She becomes "an obstacle I have to step around for ever after, occupying our Front Verandah as solidly, as inevitably, as the chair she has made her own" (17). The house bears the imprint of her body, her presence, just as surely as it bears the imprint of the narrator's own.

Autobiography, implies the narrator, is full of "body talk" (52). All of his memories come down to the same thing: "that small hot engine at the centre of all these records and recollections" (53), the body that is at the threshold of sensory, physical experience and the interior apprehension of their meaning. But what kind of body is this? Certainly, as the narrator explains, it is a past body, a child's body, that is different from the body he has now. Not only is this body smaller and softer, it has been shaped by the foods it has consumed, the fabrics that have touched the skin, the furniture and objects it has lived with, all of which change over time. It has been shaped too by

standards of health and cleanliness, and by gendered standards of beauty. But there is more. This autobiographical body, I want to suggest, is also a body that the narrator does not consciously name. This body is an ethnic body.

Malouf is not a first-generation immigrant, but the "I" of *12 Edmonstone Street* is, nevertheless, constituted in terms of the history of colonial settlement of Australia and the discourse of "foreignness" associated with non-European, non-western immigrants. This only becomes clear if each of the four sections of the text is understood as constructing part of a whole.[18] The four-part structure of this autobiography, each section dealing with a different period in the narrator's life and set in a different location, emphasizes the fluidity of the life story and the fragmentary constitution of the autobiographical "I." This is very much the autobiography of a narrator who moves, a man who cannot be confined, whose story lacks coherence, whose subjectivity can neither be reduced to a cause-and-effect formula nor assembled by bringing together its constitutive features. It is an autobiography about being in between places, and about understanding Australian identity by sometimes looking at Australia from elsewhere.

In his essay "At the Edge: Geography and the Imagination in the Work of David Malouf," Martin Leer argues that all of Malouf's work is about edges, outlines, borders. It is about the impossibility of ever getting a fix on his own subjectivity, about lacking a sense of a "self" as a solid, coherent totality. Leer relates Malouf's obsession with outlines and edges with the popular representation of Australia as "a mere outline with darkness at its centre: a void" (3), and argues that it is through constructing a personal geography--a geography that is obviously at least partly shaped by his particular mappable position in the world--that Malouf creates links between his conscious and subconscious "self," his imagination, and his memory (4).[19] But Malouf's world reaches beyond Australia. It extends to his grandfather's Lebanon, his mother's England, a small Italian village in Tuscany where he spends some of his time living and writing, the

subcontinent of India where he has travelled, and many more unnamed places. It incorporates the old world and the new, Europe and Asia, empire and colony. And it is in the juxtaposition of scenes from the narrator's life--some from childhood, others from adulthood; some set in Australia, others set in different countries--that the body of the autobiographical "I" becomes clearly visible as an ethnic body that bears the mark of his double heritage as a child of Lebanese and English ancestry.

In certain respects, Malouf's focus on the childhood house--which is the first and longest section of the book and the one readers generally find most interesting--can be read as an attempt to construct and represent a safe habitation. Elizabeth Ferrier argues that architectural motifs in contemporary Australian writing can be understood as metaphoric representations of postcolonial Australian identity, for architectural structures are powerful symbols of cultural identity (40). And yet, unifying structures of national identity, and the architectural constructs that would represent such structures, consistently fail to create a habitus for those whom they would house (52). Ferrier notes that the narrator's imaginative repossession of 12 Edmonstone Street is, in part, a failure in that the house does not offer up the ideal condition of psychic integrity and cultural identity he desires. Too many of its spaces are ambivalent. Too many are potentially threatening (46, 51). Moreover, the location of the house and some of its particular features betray the family's tenuous sense of belonging in Australia. As the narrator puts it, speaking of the characteristic verandahs of the Brisbane houses he knew as a child, "[w]ell, their evocation of the raised tent flap gives the game away completely. They are a formal confession that you are just one step up from nomads" (11). Considering his Middle Eastern ancestry, this evocation of nomadic tribes is especially resonant. The house is made from a material--weatherboard--that marks its low status as "native, provincial, poverty-stricken--poor white" (10). It is situated in "a low part of town in every sense, which is why immigrants settled there, and why abos, swaggies and metho drinkers were about" (8). It is in that no-man's-land between train tracks. A marginal

space. Not an address to be proud of. The house at 12 Edmonstone Street gives other things away too. It is built on the site of a former Aboriginal burial ground, a fact that occupies only the smallest space in the narrator's consciousness, but which signals the history of immigrant settlement of Australia and its accompanying history of the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples. 12 Edmonstone Street--even in memory--does *not* guarantee a sense of security and permanence. On the contrary, it is a reminder both of the dubious history of European settlement in Australia and of his own family's ambivalent social status as working-class immigrants with roots in England and Lebanon.

I spent my own childhood in a house at 88 Sideley, Kegworth. I had always thought that this was an address to be proud of. For one thing, there was no "Road" or "Street" attached to our address, just the "ley" part of the name, which seemed sufficient and elegant. It was a large, red brick detached house which we made bigger by adding an extension. It was situated at the edge of the village, but it was walking distance from everywhere. For years we had need for neither telephone nor car. To get to my school, I walked through a field that sometimes had cows in it and was always yellow with buttercups.

Nice memory, but distorted. Just a few months ago, my mother returned to our village, went to the house, talked to the current owner, had a cup of tea, and took photographs. Of course, the new occupants have ruined it. They've taken away the terrace wall, for one thing. But, as I talked with my parents about the house, I also remembered (or learned for the first time) a few other things. Although our house was one of the bigger and better houses of the village, it was actually located in the wrong place. Our edge of the village borders on the M1 motorway, and factories and other industrial buildings have been built nearby. Council housing is built across the street--whole neighbourhoods of it--where poorer families live. I now remember that on my

way to school I walked past not only cows and buttercups but also Slack and Parrs, a factory that manufactured (my father tells me) variable pitch propellers for ocean-going ships. This was, after all, the industrial Midlands, not the pastoral English village of the popular imagination. My Kegworth, then, is a bit rough. Sideley is not really an elegant address at all. And I remember now that my parents had trouble selling their house when we emigrated to Canada, and then didn't get a very good price for it. Property values were low.

A sense of ambivalence and anxiety disrupts the nostalgia of *12 Edmonstone Street*. This anxiety is evident both in the narrator's representation of his childhood home and in the representations of other places he has occupied. In the two middle sections of the text, the narrator presents himself as an outsider in foreign places. In the Tuscany village of "C" where he spends part of his year writing, he is like a stranger from another world. His landlady, Aganita, says the name of his homeland "as she might say Saturn or Paradise" (78-79). Just as she cannot really understand anything about his place in the world, its geography or its history, nor can the narrator ever find a way of being connected to "C" in any more than the most tenuous of ways. He is a bit of a celebrity, bringing with him an Italian production crew who are making a documentary film about him, and this proves entertaining for the villagers. But the film crew will disappear just as surely as the snow that fell for the first time since 1929 will disappear. And so too will the narrator, the famous writer, the Australian. His presence is ephemeral, as artificial as the sound recordings and scenes that the film crew stage. He is a welcome visitor, but the house where he lives will always be "Aganita's house" (72), and he will only ever occupy "C" as a place of temporary, voluntary exile.

In the third chapter, the narrator locates himself in India, a place where his presence is also always an absence. India is a place that he has been "inoculated against" (105). Although he finds that he cannot experience the place at a safe distance-

-people confront him and force him to confront them--he also finds that he lacks the ability to understand it. In part, his representation of India is orientalist. As a self-identified westerner, he is both attracted and repelled by the place. He is curious about India; it is an object of intrigue and inquiry; but he also accepts his fear of the place as natural. The narrator is struck by the juxtaposition of irreconcilable opposites--the exotic and the ugly, the sacred and the profane. He arrives with certain expectations only to find them frustrated. He leaves in a state of detached bafflement. India, or perhaps "the East" in general, is represented as inscrutable: "Nothing explained itself" (122), he says. This chapter, indeed, explains nothing about India; rather India is a place and a text through which the narrator reads himself. The unfamiliar place actually functions as a mirror in which he sees his own reflection. But who is that "I" in the mirror? Certainly the reflection is not that of a coherent "self," but that of a subject who, to some extent at least, is aware of his own areas of unknowability. In the first chapter it is only the child "I" who is represented. In the Tuscany section, the "I" who is the successful writer is foregrounded. In the India section it is the "I" as "other" who dominates. The section set in India, emphasizing as it does the fact that in unfamiliar places we cannot automatically read the codes that would make us not only comprehend these new places but also feel that we belonged in them, introduces, in important ways, the final chapter.

In the last part of the autobiography, Malouf returns to the scene of childhood. Although there is an obvious connection between the first chapter and the last in terms of chronology and setting, thematically and ideologically, the final chapter is more closely linked to the chapter on India. Both are travel narratives that reveal a disturbing and anxiety-ridden encounter with "otherness." In the final chapter, the narrator recounts a train trip he and his family took from Brisbane to Sydney. The distance between the two cities is both geographical and psychological. Their separateness, emphasized by the different train gauges and lines, is a reminder of the "jealously

guarded sovereignty of our separate states" (125) that is part of Australian social ideology.[20] To travel to Sydney means to travel to foreign parts, and the narrator eagerly watches out of the train window for tangible evidence of change and strangeness: "What I was hungry for was some proof that the world was as varied as I wanted it to be; that somewhere, on the far side of what I knew, difference began, and that the point could be clearly recognised" (127). Disappointingly, he sees no physical difference between one place and another, but when he and his father disembark at Coff's Harbour in the middle of the night and go in search of cups of tea, the narrator confronts difference of another kind.

It is 1944. On the station platform a crowd is gathered around a wagon that holds three Japanese P.O.W.'s. These prisoners are, to the people looking at them (including the narrator), both fascinating and hateful. They are caged, like circus animals on display. They are exotic objects of curiosity. But at the same time, they are clearly the enemy: "another species," "Bloody Nips," "'Bloody Japs'," "'The bastards'" (131). These bitter, racist slurs express not only war-time animosity and resentment but also

> the vast gap of darkness they felt existed there--a distance between people that had nothing to do with actual space, or that fact that you were breathing, out here in the still night of Australia, the same air. The experience was an isolating one. The moment you stepped out of the crowd and the shared sense of being part of it, you were alone. (131-32)

That distance is racial, and it has everything to do with the intolerance and hatred of the "other" that is an integral part of Australia, as well as most other contemporary western societies.

The narrator explicitly identifies his own familial history with the racism he sees acted out on that station platform. He wonders if his father is thinking about his father, the narrator's grandfather, an unnaturalized, non-English-speaking immigrant from

Lebanon, who, three years earlier, had been arrested by the Commonwealth police as an enemy alien. The narrator also thinks of his grandfather, a man who has always been somewhat alien to him because he "ate garlic and oil, smelled different, and spoke no English" (129). But his anxiety is focused most immediately on his father, and, through the father, on himself. His father had worked to prove his Australianness, his right to belong, a right that had nothing to do with details of birth or official citizenship. His father established his Australianness "most often with his fists" (132); he had "played football for the State, and was one of the toughest welter-weights of his day, greatly admired for his fairness and skill by an entire generation" (130); he was a good sportsman, physically strong, tough but fair, courageous and resourceful. In other words, he conforms to a socially-sanctioned and codified model of Australian masculinity.

Richard White traces the ways in which this particular codification of masculinity came to signify an Australian "national type." Ideas about a "national type," argues White, were an outgrowth of a nineteenth-century obsession with classification and a response to fears that the first settlers--transported convicts--would sire a degenerate Australian population. Embodied in the figure of "the coming man," the promotion of an image of a national type functioned to secure a positive sense of Australian distinctiveness, and it fostered the project of nation building. Needless to say, women, Aboriginals, and non-white immigrants did not fit the image. And this is the cause of the narrator's anxiety, for his father is also *not* Australian, as his foreign name clearly indicates. His father is of Lebanese ancestry. He speaks Arabic. And this is part of the narrator's own inheritance. Does this mean that he too should be fighting--perhaps also with his fists--to establish his own Australian credentials? It is easy to assimilate his mother's Englishness, for the England she represents, her values and behaviours, are all an integral part of the social formation of Australia. *Many* Australian families engage in the absurdity of preparing and eating steamed, roasted, and stewed

foods in the Australian heat. *Many* Australian parents teach their children to value imported goods--including cultural values--over indigenous ones. But the Lebanese part of him, can neither be erased nor diluted, and it exists in the text as an undercurrent of anxiety.

The narrator's Middle Eastern ancestry marks an unassimilable difference. The "other" in India, the "other" on the station platform, the "other" who is unknowable and provokes feelings of anger and hatred, is also the "other" who is himself. The narrator's "otherness" is not a function of skin colour or physical features. His body is not markedly different from other Australian bodies. Yet this sense of being different, and, because of that difference, potentially at risk, pervades the autobiography. Malouf has stated that he sees neither himself nor his father as migrants (Attar, note 4), but this denial is hard to reconcile with the many explicit references to the problem of ethnicity and the recurrence of the motif of the immigrant in Australia that critics such as Leer and Attar have noted in his work. Perhaps we would do well to keep in mind that in writing autobiography, in undertaking the process of going back to look again at the past, autobiographers do not necessarily see with full clarity. Perhaps certain "forgotten moments" remain forgotten, or, at least, barely recognized. Malouf's *12 Edmonstone Street*, it seems to me, is very much an autobiography about unearthing fragments of one's own subjectivity but not necessarily in order to put them together into a total picture. The text is composed of narrative pieces that can--as many readers have noted--be read alone. But in reading them across each other, as I have tried to do here, an image of a complex, shifting, hybrid subject emerges. While the "I" of this autobiography clearly represents himself as Australian, it is a representation that is fraught with contradiction and undermined by uncertainty. The narrator's particular location within Australian culture must be scrutinized. He reads himself both as an insider with special, detailed knowledge of his Brisbane origins and as an outsider, who has known moments where he has been constructed as "other" both in foreign places

and at home. There is always something "not quite" about any claim to Australian representativeness he might make--and this despite the fact that he is one of Australia's best known writers. Malouf certainly questions the homogeneity of Australian culture, as Graham Huggan suggests, but it is perhaps premature to also suggest that "through the unproclaimed agency of his own bi-cultural name, [Malouf] implicitly celebrates the multi-ethnic nature of contemporary Australian society" (62). His own ethnicity is not necessarily cause for celebration. The narrator's body in *12 Edmonstone Street,* in those moments when it is marked--always indirectly--as ethnic, is frequently an unaccommodated body, a body that can never fully and comfortably inhabit Australia.

The struggle to meaningfully relate place and subjectivity might be a particularly difficult struggle for postcolonial subjects in that postcolonials can neither fully eradicate the legacies of the "old country" that have been imposed on the colonial site nor cover up the fact that certain "others" pay a high price in the project of nation-building. If part of the political project of postcolonial writing is to retrieve and articulate a reality that resists containment within the terms and languages of colonial discourse, then one of the ways in which this can be achieved is through the conscious articulation of *specific* places and the ways in which *specific* subjects inhabit them. As Paul Connerton argues, "cultural memory is tied up, in certain important and specific ways, with memory of *places*" ("Contemporary Cultural Amnesia"). But there is nothing that would guarantee that either "culture" or "places" are homogeneous. For Jane Willis, a significant place is the residential school which determines her subjectivity as a colonized Native subject and which stands in for the insidious institutional and ideological apparatus of Canadian colonialism against which she writes. For David Malouf, a significant place is his childhood home in South Brisbane, a house which represents a hybrid, ethnic family inheritance. Both writers inscribe themselves as *embodied* subjects, and this is key, because subjects do not exist in purely textual or discursive worlds. Rather, these autobiographical subjects factor in the

materiality of embodied existence, for both autobiographers are conscious not only of the ways in which their bodies *signify* in culture but also how their bodies might *shape* culture by signifying inappropriately.

Notes

[1] Teresa L. Ebert offers an excellent review of the way this debate has developed in feminist criticism. Ebert argues against a postmodernist "ludic" feminism, which conceives of subjectivity as a function of performance and linguistic play, on the grounds that such ludic theories fail to propose a politically viable strategy of resistance and social transformation.

[2] Butler makes this argument most clearly in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Her more recent book, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* is a defence of her position.

[3] Some autobiographers appear to retain very early memories of themselves as prelinguistic but corporeally-aware infants. Sidonie Smith notes that Virginia Woolf's "Sketch of the Past" evokes two inaugural memories, both of which are associated with physical sensations (*Subjectivity* 87-88). In my own reading of autobiography, I have been struck by the opening passages of Miles Franklin's *Childhood at Brindabella: My First Ten Years,* where Franklin describes her earliest memory of herself at age ten months being carried by her father from one room to another. Refuting common wisdom that infants are polymorphous, unaware blobs, the narrator insists that "I remembered little more, but to this day retain a clearcut sense of place and direction" (5). This points to the importance of the *spatiality* of memory.

[4] Grosz notes that Freud does not expand on this insight. Freud argues that "the ego is represented as a psychical map, a projection of the surface of the body. In this case the ego is the psychical representation of the subject's perceived and libidinalized relation to its body . . . [but] Freud leaves these suggestive remarks unexplored" (*Jacques* 31-32).

[5] My overview of Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage" is influenced by Elizabeth Grosz's description and analysis in *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction.*

[6] Interestingly, contemporary autobiographers seem to recognize the significance of the infantile mirror image in the constitution of their own subjectivity. Roland Barthes includes a photograph of his mother holding him in her arms and looking into the camera's eye. The photograph is captioned "The mirror stage: 'That's you'." And the front cover illustration of the McPhee-Gribble edition of Drusilla Modjeska's *Poppy* shows a mother holding an infant in front of a mirror.

[7] Grosz makes this argument most forcefully in her essay "Notes Towards a Corporeal Feminism."

[8] Later in this chapter, Fanon rejects the mind-body duality of western Enlightenment philosophy: "Yes, we are--we Negroes--backward, simple, free in our behaviour. That is because for us the body is not something opposed to what you call the mind. We are in the world. And long live the couple, Man and Earth!" (126-27). Here, Fanon posits an essential difference between blacks and whites, but he does so by recuperating the stereotype that would equate black identity with the black body.

[9] See Julia V. Emberley (85-91) for a discussion of the ways in which the Indian Acts created specific categories of oppression for aboriginal women. The debate over who should be permitted "Indian" status and the right to live on reservation lands is far from settled. Recently, the chief of the Sawridge Band of Slave Lake, Alberta mounted a federal court challenge to Bill C-31, arguing that women who marry outside their bands and cultures should not be permitted access to reserve land, apparently because they bring the unwanted influence of white culture into Native territory. See Danylchuk's reporting of the court case. Clearly, aboriginal communities are not unified in terms of either ideologies or goals.

[10] Other autobiographies by aboriginal peoples exhibit this double naming as a legacy of European colonization. Sometimes two names are designated as the author's, as is the case, for instance with Labumore (Elsie Roughsey) and Doris Pilkington (Nugi

Garimara). Sometimes, as in Willis's text, the doubleness is signalled by the disjunction between the author's name and the name of the protagonist. Alice French's *My Name is Masak* is another example of the latter.

[11] There is a long tradition of collaborative aboriginal autobiography. In these texts, life stories are collected and written down by non-aboriginal writers, usually ethnographers. These texts are commonly referred to as "as-told-to" autobiographies, and the copyright is held by either the ethnographer or both the ethnographer and the person whose life provides the content of the narrative. For important critical analyses of this tradition in the North American context see Arnold Krupat's *For Those Who Come After*, David H. Brumble III's *American Indian Autobiography*, and Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands's *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives*. More recently, aboriginal writers are producing self-authored autobiographies, although these too are frequently edited--sometimes heavily--by a non-aboriginal editor. There is no evidence of an editor present in *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood*; however, I would be surprised if there were not a silent white editor somewhere behind the text. Although editors are more self-conscious now, and usually identify themselves and their editing strategies and sometimes clearly mark their points of intervention, the early date of publication of this text (1973) would suggest that it was not allowed to go to press untouched by a white hand. Nevertheless, the proliferation of self-authored autobiographies does indicate an urgent demand on the part of aboriginal peoples to tell their own stories in their own words. And, with the recent establishment of aboriginal owned and operated publishing houses, such as Theytus Books in Canada and Magabala Books in Australia, one might assume that unwanted white intervention in aboriginal autobiographical production will eventually be eradicated.

[12] See Jean Barmen, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill's *Indian Education in Canada*, volume 1, Diane Persson's "Blue Quills: A Case Study of Indian Residential Schooling," and Richard A. King's *The School at Mopass: A Problem of Identity*.

[13] In her poem cycle "Squaw Poems," Marilyn Dumont attempts to reappropriate the pejorative word "squaw" and make it her own by revealing the way it has been used against her. However, in conversation with me during the writing of this dissertation, Dumont admits to being uncertain whether such a word *can* be reclaimed and its meaning changed. "I'm not finished with this word yet," she says.

[14] See, for instance, Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* (22-23), Doris Pilkington: Nugi Garimara's *Caprice-- A Stockman's Daughter* (60), and Grace's account in Lynda Shorten's *Without Reserve* (39-49).

[15] Celia Haig-Brown comments that hair cutting violates Native social codes. Not only is long hair a sign of female beauty, but in some Native communities, cutting hair short signified social ostracization (52).

[16] Hartmut Lutz notes that the term "protest literature" has most often served to position Native writing as peripheral to mainstream "Canadian literature" (2).

[17] See also Yi-Fu Tuan's *Topophilia* and *Space and Place*.

[18] Reviewers and critics have been unable to agree whether the text represents four separate autobiographical essays or four autobiographical short stories or an autobiography with four chapters.

[19] For another interpretation of the importance of geographic metaphors in Malouf's work, particularly his autobiography, see Graham Huggan.

[20] Gillian Whitlock argues that articulations of separate regional identities are not particularly strong in a contemporary Australian culture that is based on a continental vision of the nation. Where these ideas do exist, they rarely originate in the regions themselves. She asserts that a particular representation of Queensland as "the

last frontier," for instance, is "generated from the outside; the Queensland state of mind is imported, derivative, and, like many other things, comes to us from the south" ("Queensland" 86).

Chapter Three

The Language of Home

In a very real sense, this entire thesis is about the idea of home, and a single chapter cannot contain or even organize the many meanings and resonances of the signifier "home" in contemporary Canadian and Australian autobiography. One could argue that home and homelessness are crucial issues at this point in history for all peoples, and that the difficulties associated with the idea of home are not necessarily peculiar to Canada and Australia; however, there are particular ways in which the problem of home is represented in these second world countries, for the idea of home in these locations is inevitably bound up with histories of colonial settlement and contemporary, ambivalently-defined, postcolonial social realities. Postcolonial writing, as many critics have argued, often mobilizes an imported European language and literary form in an effort to construct an authentic and viable sense of place or home.[1] Frequently, however, an authentic and stable formulation of home remains unattainable, for alternative, often troubling narratives interrupt the apparent seamlessness of autogenetic narratives. Tracing the problematic of home in contemporary fictions, Homi K. Bhabha argues that even the most private domestic space can be experienced as "unhomely" in that it can be fractured by the intrusion of politics, violence, and cultural dislocation ("The World" 141). Bhabha suggests that "the 'unhomely' is a paradigmatic post-colonial experience," although "it has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the power of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions" ("The World" 142). The unhomely moment is that which "relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" ("The World" 144). Such relations, I want to suggest, can be found in postcolonial autobiographical writings. Second world spaces offer an intriguing context in which the experience of

the "unhomely" can be explored, for settler societies demonstrate a profound ambivalence towards the idea of home. Historically, "home" has had a double reference. It has referred to the "parent" European nation, which represented ancestral origins and defined standards of civility, and the new world space in which different and more promising futures could potentially be fashioned. But nation-building was not a benevolent enterprise equally managed by all inhabitants, and in literary texts produced from within contemporary settler cultures, the idea of home is frequently ruptured by a history marked by such "unhomely" matters as racism, the marginalization of non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants, and the often violent subjugation of aboriginal peoples.

It is clear that the idea of home for white settler Canadian and Australian subjects is a *construct*. The word "home," in these locations, describes neither a natural inheritance, nor an organic relationship between person and place, for the position of the settler inhabitant is a chronically tenuous one. European settlers of the previous century set out to make these alien spaces into homes. They did so partly through their labour--working the land, building both physical and social structures--and partly through acts of imagination and language--naming the things and places around them. But settlement did not automatically guarantee well-defined and comfortable relations between European peoples and places. For many, it still doesn't, and one could argue that the project of contemporary non-Aboriginal Canadians and Australians, all descendents of immigrants from elsewhere, is still the project of their ancestors: to find viable and meaningful ways of making a territory in which one has no ancestral or cultural roots into a home.

As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, rightly point out, the problem of settler society identity is a problem that will not go away. Even first--and sometimes later--generation Canadians and Australians experience a sense of "alienation of vision and [. . .] crisis in self-image which this displacement produces" (9). Ross Gibson describes the condition of Australian white settler society in this way:

> non-Aboriginal Australia is a young society, under-endowed with myths of "belonging." The country is still sparsely populated and meagerly historicized. Alienation and the fragility of culture have been the refrains for two hundred years of white Australian images and stories. *Every* plot of Australian earth, *every* spike of spinifex has not yet become a sign in the arbitrary system of meaning which is history. Or rather, until recently, every plot outside city limits has tended to signify just one thing: homelessness. (64-65)

The particular roles that land and topography have to play in this problem of articulating home is an issue that I will take up in some detail in this chapter, especially in the Australian context. For the idea of home is closely associated with the idea of land: its particular topographical features and aesthetic qualities; the myths and ideologies associated with it; who owns it.

The indigenization of the transplanted European--how the white settler "I" is written into the new place--is a recurring theme in postcolonial literatures. Tracing this theme in postcolonial novels, Helen Tiffin notes that two dominant motifs inform the theme of indigenization: the European protagonist's journey into the interior regions of the land, which represents the protagonist's attempt to establish "house, home or dynasty on new soil" by approximating the indigene's relation to place; and the trope of house building, which represents the settler's colonization of "unoccupied" space and his adaptation to the realities and materials of the new place ("New Concepts" 22-23). And yet the sense of belonging these two motifs gesture towards is not so easily achieved. The theme of indigenization in these literatures, Tiffin argues, is often taken up as an inability to find appropriate accommodation. Postcolonial literatures are replete with stories that document the settler protagonist's failure to enclose, contain, define, or understand the new space, a failure that is most often a consequence of the misfit between imported European notions of landscape and spatial relations and the

indigenous environment. Even the most private of spaces becomes problematic in the "new world." The physical structure of the house, for instance, is a powerful trope of settler indigenization that carries with it a long history of meanings (see Ferrier). One thinks of Robinson Crusoe's obsessive need to build himself a house and mark out his territory, an activity that signals the bourgeois European individual's need to contain the ego and keep the "savage other" (be that "other" environment, animal, or indigenous human) at bay. But postcolonial writing, as Ferrier argues, often records the failure of the house (as both a physical and a psychic structure) to provide the shelter, security, and personal integrity the protagonist requires. Tiffin suggests that this failure could have positive effects: "in the postcolonial world acceptance of fragmentation of personality and the abandonment of the idea of home might be often not a strategy for survival but offer a potential for creativity" ("New Concepts" 24-25). The absence of easy certainties of ancestry, tradition, and history makes available a hybrid and contradictory postcolonial subject position that might be productive in that it permits self-fashioning.

Finding the creative potential in such a fragmented, hybrid identity is an enormously difficult undertaking. When old patterns of identity do not fit a new environment, the subject is most likely to feel adrift, cut off from the familiar and the known, and will not immediately find such alienation comforting or secure. Formulating new patterns of identity is akin to entering unknown, unmapped territory, a metaphoric association that is neither accidental nor casual, for at the heart of the identity-making enterprise is the fact that identity must be redefined in relation to a new place. How can the new place be produced in such a way that it is culturally meaningful and affectively satisfying? How can the vast, "empty" spaces of the Australian desert or the dense bush of Canada, for instance, be turned into habitable, human place? How can regions without long histories--or, more accurately, regions with histories that are not part of the settler's own inheritance--be occupied as home?

At the core of these questions is the problem of finding an appropriate language of home. The Canadian poet Dennis Lee calls this enterprise learning to find the right cadence of place. Writing in Canada, says Lee, means using an alien language. It means confronting the obstructions to cadence that result from living in colonial space:[2]

> "language", "home", "here"--have no native charge; they convey only meanings in whose face we have been unable to find ourselves since the eighteenth century. This is not a call for arbitrary new "Canadian" definitions, of course. It is simply to point out that the texture, weight and connotation of almost every word we use comes from abroad. For a person whose medium is words, who wants to use words to recreate our being human here--and where else do we live?--that fact creates an absolute impasse . . . . Try to speak the words of your home and you will discover--if you are a colonial--that you do not know them. (513)

As Robert Kroetsch so memorably put it, the task of the writer in a new country such as Canada is not to name but to *unname (The Lovely* 58). It is to shake off the shackles of an alien and inappropriate inheritance, carried in language, through a process of investigation and critique. Through such a process, something new comes into being: a language of home. That language is not already there, waiting to be discovered by a Canadian subject who recognizes what constitutes authenticity in Canadian space; rather, the language of home must be negotiated, tested, and constantly reviewed. It is an ongoing, constantly shifting creative performance.

Autobiography is one textual site where a language of home might be meaningfully (if not always positively) produced. The idea of home is metaphorically associated with particular landscapes, architectural structures, objects, people, and experiences, although it is never entirely fixable or verifiable. Home in autobiographical writing does not refer to a real place but to a constructed one, manufactured through acts of memory and imagination. Its lack of mimetic veracity,

however, makes it no less significant to the autobiographer. In speaking and writing their homes, autobiographers also speak and write themselves into specific times and places. Aritha van Herk, in a personal essay in which she considers her own experience as an immigrant child of Dutch heritage growing up in rural Alberta, writes of growing up with the idea that the place she inhabited was "nowhere" (64). Her particular world did not have a history of literature that consolidated and affirmed its importance, and so she set out to write about Canadian geography, history, and culture. "[W]riting about a place makes it somewhere" (64), she says. And, if writing about a place makes it somewhere, then perhaps writing about the self in relation to a particular place makes the "I" someone. It creates a subject position from which to speak. It grounds the "I" and situates the utterance. Autobiography, then, might be understood as a genre that writes the "I" into a home.

Personally I find home a troublesome concept. I utter the word casually in reference to the place where I currently pay rent and sleep at night, but I don't feel that this apartment is my home. My parents have occupied the same house in Guelph for over twenty years and think of it as the family home, but it is not mine. I hardly lived there, and when I spend time in that house now it is as a visitor, not an occupant. My original English home exists in my memory and in the stories that I tell about it, but it is also a place that is lost to me. The England that I knew isn't there anymore, nor is the me who was English. I read Drusilla Modjeska's Poppy, written by an immigrant daughter in Australia, and I come upon a question that resonates for me: what would it be like to live all of one's life in the same house?[3] *I can't imagine that much continuity. Home, for me (as it is for Clark Blaise in Resident Alien) is "unhoused." It is a shifting set of memories, associations, and relations that I cannot attach to a particular architectural structure or environment. Home is a movable concept.*

How is home written in autobiography? And how is it written differently in Canadian or Australian contexts? What particular social and cultural conditions produce what particular kinds of homes? Which images and myths are associated with home? Which words and behaviours are appropriate to it? What does it take to belong there? These are questions that underscore this study. There is nothing natural about a home, nothing organic or scientifically classifiable. Home is an idea. A construct. It is something we make. But we all occupy places as homes, and we have certain ideas and feelings that are connected to them. This is the stuff of autobiography.

Home and the World of Childhood

The childhood home, because it is that all important point of origin and first memory, is crucial to the act of autobiography. Richard N. Coe, in *When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood*, argues that in autobiographies of childhood and adolesence, the home and its immediate environs are an extremely important locus of subject formation. In Coe's analysis, home is more than the totality of its physical features, its size, shape, and location; it is also more than its social or political coordinates, its position with respect to class or community. The childhood home is a special place infused with the child's own significance and reality, his own peculiar truth. Typically the childhood world is not a verifiably accurate representation of the original place; rather, this world is represented according to its symbolic and emotional content. In the classical examples of the sub-genre, suggests Coe, the world of childhood is tightly circumscribed, filled with trivial objects and environments, and structured by magical and irrational events. It is intimately known and described in precise detail, but it is a world that exists only for the child and for the adult writer who now struggles to find the language appropriate to it. This special world represents the internal, poetic truth of the autobiographer's past and confirms his uniqueness. Autobiographers, Coe argues, recreate this alternative world in an attempt to discover

order in the disparate experiences of life and to answer the question of how they became their adult selves.[4] But they constantly negotiate between the language of the childhood world and the language of the mature "self." Home, then, can perhaps be thought of as that which is constituted through this process of negotiation. Never something fixable and verifiable, it is, nevertheless, made present and significant in the act of writing.

Coe's theory of "the Childhood" is important to the present study because his is one of the few studies that considers the role of particular places in the autobiographer's representation of his or her subjectivity. It is not coincidental that place is a key issue for Coe, for in reading autobiographical writings across cultures, it is impossible to ignore the very strong connection between representations of the child "I" and the physical and cultural contexts in which the "I" is situated. The details of the child's special world are details associated with very particular habitats.[5] Coe's insight into the complexity and fullness of the child's world is illuminating, but perhaps most provocative is his recognition of the interrelation of language, place, and subjectivity. The child's world, says Coe, is "a very small place, complete in itself, and perfect in its completeness" (206). The small world becomes the child's through language, through the ability of the child to put words to objects and places: "By naming it--whatever *it* is--the child assimilates it, makes it his own, allows it to sink into the very fibres of his being, into a darkness from which, later, the poet may or may not be able to retrieve it" (206).

But that perfection is only possible because he thinks of it as his by natural right. Coe notes that the child's sense of control over his environment is complicated in relatively "unexplored" places such as Australia where many features of the natural landscape--flowers for instance--are unnamed. "This namelessness is felt by the poet as a serious, even as a frightening deprivation. He has been robbed of something, part of himself, his very birthright. Is it even possible to be a poet with such a gap at the very heart of experience . . .?" (206). Nevertheless, Coe finds that Australians have produced

a wealth of autobiographical texts, and he suggests that this lack of readily available names for places and things has actually motivated autobiographical writing. In a survey essay, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Australian," published prior to his book-length study, Coe argues that the tension between the bush (and the romanticized pioneer past associated with it) and the suburbs (which represent a lack of sophisticated culture) is the central organizing myth of Australian autobiography. While the special and magical world he associates with "the Childhood" proper is firmly rooted in the natural environment--"the Bush, the sea-coast or the Outback" ("Portrait" 134)--Coe recognizes that the articulation of urban and suburban experience (which, after all, represents the experience of the majority of Australians) has played a significant role in the shaping of an Australian cultural tradition. Naming one's own place, then, has been an important strategy in Australian autobiography--and perhaps all "new world" autobiography--for it confers validity and authority both on the place itself and on the autobiographer who inhabits it.

Canadian critics of autobiography have also noted the importance of childhoods in Canadian writing. Thomas E. Tausky follows Coe's theory and method and argues that the important myth (Coe's term) of Canadian autobiography is the region. Unlike Australian autobiographers who are concerned with the inscription of national identities based on a continental vision, Canadians tend to focus on the small town and the region and "do not often speak of the nation as a whole" (41). Tausky suggests that the different historical patterns of colonial settlement in Canada and Australia might account for this difference. Shirley Neuman also notes the importance of "the Childhood" in Canadian autobiography and discusses the richness and variety of texts that use the form. Neuman does not speculate as to why so many Canadian autobiographers write childhoods, but she does comment on the limits of the conventions described by Coe's theory in relation to specific Canadian settings and experiences. Classical childhoods are more likely to be written by Canadians when their

backgrounds are urban and financially secure, notes Neuman, but other factors, such as the autobiographer's isolation due to differences of race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, the intrusion of violence and abuse into the family home, the distance between the various members of families, the experiences unique to small town life, and the sheer vastness of some childhood landscapes require either adaptation or refusal of the sub-genre's literary conventions ("Life-Writing" 364-68).

There can be little doubt that Coe's theory is dependent on a rather idealized view of childhood. Although he admits that childhood can sometimes be a "Paradis perdu," for the most part his study confirms a representation of childhood that is Romantic in origin. Coe's autobiographical child is an innocent, and his world is largely unmarked by political or social structures. And yet children *do* live in political worlds that are informed by social institutions and the ideologies that underpin them. Coe does recognize the important role of class in many autobiographical childhoods, but he largely fails to consider other factors that might influence a child's experience of childhood and shape his or her subjectivity. The world Coe describes is pastoral, full of small detail and subtle beauty. It is a perfectly *manageable* world, a world in which space is contained and bordered and in which the child can feel relatively secure. This is a perfect home.

The tension between childhood remembered as an ideal and childhood remembered as a time and place of difficulty and suffering is central to Gabrielle Roy's autobiography, *Enchantment and Sorrow*. In this autobiography, the narrator is positioned within cultural and physical landscapes that are both sites of romantic nostalgia and sites of the remembered pain of poverty and cultural marginality. Place is an important factor in the representation of the narrator's life, for as she moves from Manitoba, to France, to England, and finally to Quebec, the narrator articulates the many meanings--cultural and political, as well as personal and emotional--that are associated

with those environments. The childhood place, however, and the meanings and feelings associated with it, remains of paramount importance.

Gabrielle Roy's *Enchantment and Sorrow:* The Landscape of the Horizon

Although it is now out of fashion and can be politically retrogressive to make evaluative judgments about particular literary texts, I wish to announce that I love this book. It moved me. And it worked for me on both an emotional and an intellectual level (if those two ways of reading can ever be separated). But it is also a book with which I have a complex relationship, for I recognize that part of its attraction for me is its very foreignness. As it happens, I have acquired a very indirect connection to Gabrielle Roy. I have come to know a family that originates in Somerset, Manitoba, the small town near where Roy spent so many cherished weekends at her Uncle Excide's farm. The grandmother of the family I know was a contemporary of Roy's and knew her at school. But apart from this coincidental connection, Roy's world is alien to me. My context is quite different, because my culture, my Canada, is different.

The distance between me and this text is obvious in my inability to read it in the original French. Despite several years of study and trips to both Quebec and France, my French is inadequate to the task of reading the text Roy wrote, and I must fall back on the comfortable familiarities of Patricia Claxton's English translation. The fact that I read a translation raises all sorts of questions about my interpretation of it. Whose representation of a life is this, Claxton's or Roy's? Who inscribes the narrative "I"? In some ways, these questions can only be fully explored by undertaking a comparative analysis of the French and the English texts, but too often that sort of analysis can be reduced to an evaluation of how the translation diverges from the original, putting into motion a whole number of troublesome assumptions about authenticity and truth. I am willing to accept the idea that the "I" in autobiography is always a "fictive structure," to use Eakin's formulation,[6] *and that both texts are representations, not transparent*

expressions of reality. But they are also narratives that are grounded in particular histories and places, and what I am acutely aware of when I read this book is that my history and place in this country are quite different, despite our common "Canadianness." In a very real sense, Gabrielle Roy and I do not inhabit the same nation. Her Canada is a country in which she can feel an oppressed member of a minority group, where her language and culture are marginalized, where she always feels like somewhat of a stranger in her own land, and where many of her fellow citizens cannot read the text that she wrote.

Roy's autobiography opens by situating the narrator within Manitoba, and although it is a place that she will leave in her youth and to which she will never permanently return, this is the landscape of her childhood home, and it functions as an important site of subject formation.[7] This landscape is invested with both significant memories and important symbolic associations, which are summarized in a recurring image: the horizon. In the early sections of the text, the narrator describes the view over the flat prairie and the great sense of comfort and satisfaction she derives from looking at the huge, unobstructed, clear sky. This is an image that she will not only seek out in other landscapes in other parts of the world, but that she will also recreate in memory when in need of solace. When emerging from the woods near her Uncle Excide's farm, on one of her solitary walks, the narrator is struck by a "feeling of space" (36), a feeling she metaphorically connects with her own life:

> In that permanence in constant motion, in that tranquil yet beckoning immensity, there was a beauty that tugged at my heart like a magnet, even when I was still very young. I kept returning to that vista as if it might get away from me if I left it alone too long. I'd arrive at the end of the farm road, reach the place where the trees parted, and the vast, magnetic expanse would appear, and each time it was the world laid at

> my feet again. But really much more than the world, I know that now." (37)

This is the image that she will consistently associate with her own personal potential, her longing, and her hope. However, the horizon remains an image of an ideal existence, rather than an actual representation of the narrator's lived experience. She will remember the long view afforded by the open prairie and the immensity and grandeur of the horizon most especially during times of struggle and confusion, for it provides a sense of consolation and at least the promise of boundless possibility. But it is an image that she has had to construct as positive, for her own particular experience of inhabiting that landscape has taught her that horizons are not boundless.[8] On the contrary, the narrator learns that there will always be barriers and limits to her freedom, both familial and cultural, that she must confront and struggle to overcome. In fact, the narrator's childhood environment is a place that she eventually *refuses*, for, to some extent, it refuses her.

The most immediate difficulty is her Frenchness. This fact immediately positions her as "other" in relation to an Anglo-dominated Canadian social formation. Her otherness is deeply felt; indeed, the autobiography opens with a scene that encapsulates the alterity of Manitoba Francophone experience. The narrator and her mother make "frequent forays" (3) into Winnipeg from their home in the French community of St-Boniface. These shopping trips are "expeditions" (8), undertaken by women--both the women who shop and the women who work in the department stores. Instead of the bounty of big game, the women bring home small, inexpensive treasures, the purpose of the trips being to hunt for bargains. Crossing the Provencher Bridge between French St-Boniface and English Winnipeg means crossing a border that separates two distinct worlds divided by culture and language. Although when her mother is in an assertive frame of mind she demands to be served by a French-speaking salesperson--a demand that the narrator interprets as a "duty" enacted at a "patriotic

moment" (5) and which will inevitably be fulfilled by a woman who is a "compatriot" (5) from St-Boniface--on other days, her mother would lower her voice and "'bring out'" her English (5), a sign of weariness if not outright defeat. The constant awareness of their difference and marginality and the constant struggle to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage weighs on them all. When they cross the Provencher Bridge again, their return is marked by a feeling of homecoming. Their mood lightens; they greet everyone they know; they are once again in familiar territory. Their own house on Deschambault Street represents a safe haven: "We must have felt it was something like a miracle to find our house still intact and standing guard over our French way of life, protecting it from the hurly-burly and disparity of the Canadian West, for in the last minute we'd hurry towards it, as though we might arrive to find it had been snatched away from us" (8). The house represents defense and protection.

A language of militarism and battle infuses the description of these shopping trips (Socken 434). And, despite the fact that the narrator claims to have enjoyed these border crossings, especially because these experiences helped to sharpen her writer's ability to observe subtle detail and nuance, she knows that her Frenchness is something that marks her as different and inferior. People on the streets of Winnipeg stare at her when she speaks French. In school, she learns very quickly that the only way to get ahead is to learn English, indeed, to excel in it. When she protests that French Canadian children are forced, through their immersion in English schools, into the mold of an English Canadian identity, her protests are met with some sympathy from the school principal, but he advises her, nevertheless, to assimilate:

> "Work at your French," he said. "Always be faithful to it. Teach it when you get the chance and as much as you can. . . without getting caught. But don't forget, you'll have to excel in English too. The tragic thing about minorities is that they have to be better, or disappear . . . . Can you

> yourself, dear child, see another way out for you?" (65, ellipses in the original)

The narrator learns that her culture will never be dominant or even equal to the culture of the social order. Moreover, she learns that the price of her acceptance is falsity. As she puts it, "[r]uefully, I'd discovered I could be liked, and even considered charming and lovable, as long as I stayed in my place, second place that is, and showed I was content to be there" (66). Any resistance must be covert, not an open revolution. When she is a student she can speak French only unofficially. And when she is a teacher, if she is to teach French at all, it must be in secret, for outwardly she must conform to the rules of the English-dominated institutions within which she lives and works. But the narrator knows that to force young French children to speak English is to deform their identities and to confirm their inferiority.

Certainly, the right to protect and preserve French language and culture in Canada has been something French Canadians have had to fight for. But the struggle is of a different order for Francophones outside of Quebec. As Roy's text makes clear, French Canada is itself geographically fragmented, and the isolation of Francophones outside of Quebec complicates the question of French Canadian identity.[9] The narrator traces her family's origins to Quebec and thinks of it as the "mother province" (65), but the truth is that Manitoba Francophones have always been regarded as distant country relations, poor cousins, visitors to a truly "distinct society." As a child, the narrator would often ask her mother to tell the history of their origins. Her ancestors were Acadians who were forced off their rich farmlands by the English and put onto ships that dropped them off in various ports of the United States. The family settled for a time in Connecticut, but it split apart when some members were persuaded by French priests (called "colonizers") to leave the United States and return North to Quebec. Those who left the United States were persuaded to increase their numbers by having lots of children, an idea that was represented by the priests as "the price of winning back

our place in the sun" (15), but which was actually a way of securing a sizable French presence in Canada. The acquisition and cultivation of land and the reproduction of children have always been important aspects of nation-building, and French Canada was keen to consolidate its status as a so-called "founding nation." But as the size of the grandparents' family grew, and the land they had settled proved to be too poor and rocky and hemmed in by hills to expand their personal empire, they decided to move once again, this time to the Pembina Mountain settlements of Manitoba. There they lived under the jurisdiction of a provincial government that promised to protect French language and culture. The colonists believed in their right and their duty to claim access to all parts of Canada. Indeed, they were encouraged to colonize the west quickly because it was already filling up with Scots and English. The colonists' dream was to establish French communities from sea to sea. Of course, none of the settlers, regardless of their points of origin, thought seriously about the Native and Métis peoples who were already there. When the Manitoba government revoked its promise to protect French culture and forbade the teaching of French in public schools, their dream was betrayed. Suddenly, they became aware of their isolation from their "second home," Quebec, and although they struggled to keep their language and culture alive, without government support, the effort impoverished and exhausted them.

This story delights and satisfies the narrator as a young girl, for it represents her link to her own history and ancestry, but it also troubles her. She sees herself and her mother as part of a long tradition of exiles and wanderers who are cut off from an ancestral home and have been generally unwelcome wherever they go. She is conscious of their peculiar history of homelessness and how that feeling continues in her own life. When her mother tells of the homesickness and wretched working conditions her ancestors endured in Connecticut, the narrator realizes that "home" is a signifier without a clear referent: "This was the point in Maman's story at which I began to worry about the notion of home, about what exactly it meant, collectively speaking. In any event, I

caught her off-base by asking her point blank if we had a home" (14). This is an unanswerable question--and one that troubles her mother too--for the connections between land, culture, language, and ancestry have all been upset, rearranged, and transported through the processes of migration and settlement. The clear, linear paths of history are untenable in the case of the narrator's family, for their history is characterized by upheaval, removal from home and, to some extent at least, removal from culture--even within French Canada itself. Nowhere is this fracture between Quebec and Manitoba clearer than when the narrator makes her first trip to the "revered motherland" (110) Although she is delighted to enter a world in which everyone speaks French, she is distressed to discover that Quebec is largely uninterested in her. She returns as a prodigal daughter only to discover that her absence has not been noticed, and she learns the hard way that "[o]ur own, once out of sight, are no longer really our own" (110).

An ancestral history of uprooting and dislocation, of the struggle to maintain a cultural identity, of fatigue and failure--these are the factors that shape the narrator's particular inheritance. And it is a burdensome inheritance indeed. She is reminded of that burden every day of her life by just looking at her own parents. Her father was directly involved in the dream of colonizing western Canada with pockets of French communities, for he had worked as a settlement officer. But he had lost his job--and his pension--just before reaching retirement age. With his job, her father also lost his dreams for the future and his sense of purpose. The narrator's dominant image of him is of an old, silent, defeated man who prefers to sit in isolation from the family in a small, unused summer kitchen staring ahead, watching the sun sink below the western horizon. It is a posture--looking towards the horizon, thinking about possibilities unrealized or yet to be realized--that the narrator can identify with. In her mother the narrator sees a woman who suffers from overwork, fear of destitution, and the demands of too many children, most of whom are unhappy, one of whom is mentally ill. The narrator knows that her mother sees her as the only child who has the possibility of achieving happiness.

She also know that her mother looks to her for consolation and compensation for her own difficult life. This is indeed a burden, and the narrator grows up believing that it is her job to "make good for Maman" (21). She also know that her childhood illness and the operation that her mother struggled to pay for puts her forever in her mother's debt. Childhood, for the narrator, then, is hardly a time of innocence and magic; rather it is a time when she learns that her experiences and her history come with serious problems and responsibilities.

The central conflict of *Enchantment and Sorrow* is the narrator's need and desire to "make good" for her mother. She realizes that the only way she can do this is through finding her vocation, but finding her vocation also means separating from both her mother and her mother country. Although the relationship between the narrator and her mother is crucial to the thematics of the autobiography, I will not explore it in detail here.[10] My interest is in how this conflict is taken up as a conflict of place, for the situation that the narrator faces is played out in terms of exile and separation. The problem is not that she sees Canada in general and Manitoba in particular as cultural wastelands that either stifle creativity or reduce it to an imitation of European culture. On the contrary, the narrator's lively stories of her involvement with a travelling theatre troupe and her own essentially poetic apprehension of the landscape and the people that constitute her environment (I am thinking here in particular of her description of her experience teaching at a small school in an isolated northern Manitoba community, an experience which eventually became the basis of her novel *Where Nests the Water Hen*) suggest that she knows that art can be made in her own country. Rather, her need to separate herself from mother and motherland has more to do with her inability to find a place for herself within an English-dominated Canadian social order that does not just undervalue her language and her particular cultural history but actively seeks to suppress it: "Hardly a day went by without the strange thought entering my head that I wasn't really at home here, that I had a life to make for myself elsewhere. I'd been brought up

to be French, but what would I find here to nourish and sustain me?" (109). She may be at the centre of her mother's life, but she is also marginalized by forces greater than herself, her immediate family, or her community. Indeed, it is almost impossible to "make good" when everything about her--her language, her cultural heritage, and also her gender--is defined as peripheral to Canadian society. She could have chosen to stay close to her mother and Manitoba, but only if she had agreed to the terms dictated by the social and political codes of her environment: the approved feminine roles of dutiful daughter and teacher. She could have agreed to stay in her place. But the narrator's dreams and desires are bigger than that. She speaks of being "raving mad in my frenzy to be loved, wanted, to feel at home somewhere at last" (111). And rather than "give in peacefully" and "cross over to the English side" (110), she decides to look even further back to her ancestral origins. She goes to Europe, a place her mother thinks of as a different "other side" (167) but no less of a betrayal. Her leaving bears a heavy cost, for it is an act that some members of the French community, and even her own family, interpret as "deserting, abandoning the cause" (168).

The second part of the autobiography documents the narrator's time spent in Europe, first in France and later in England. These years are turbulent ones, but they are also years of exciting new experiences and moments of great joy. These are the years when she falls in real, adult love for the first time. These are also the years when she learns that she can live independently. But the most important lesson that the narrator learns while she is in Europe is that she is not destined for a career on the stage, as she had originally thought, but that she must be a writer. Curiously, this is a realization that comes to her not in France, the source of her cultural and linguistic history, but in England. The narrator has an ambivalent relationship with France. She does find much that is familiar and comforting. Describing one of her first nights there, for instance, she speaks of "a feeling of belonging here, of unbelievable well-being" (212). But this is a feeling that is not sustained, mainly because what she had gone to Paris to achieve--

an acting career--is the wrong goal. Although the narrator persists for some time, she experiences the theatre as a trap from which she must flee. In fleeing the theatre she also flees Paris and moves, instead, to England. Perhaps in France, the narrator discovers again that "[o]ur own, once out of sight, are no longer really our own" (110), as she had in Quebec. It is almost as if in going to Europe the narrator is attempting to invent new narratives of her "self." She tries on different lives and different roles in new places.

In many ways, of course, England can never truly be home to the narrator, for differences of language and history, not to mention the historical animosity between the two nations, cannot be smoothly eradicated or effaced. Nevertheless, England represents a place of comfort and security, and it becomes the place in which the narrator finds a series of surrogate homes. If we remember Coe's contention that in the writing of childhood and adolescence autobiographers often create small, special worlds, then it is curious that Roy creates this special world *not* in the Manitoba environment of her early years, but in England when she is a good deal older. One particular place is represented as a paradise, an "oasis" (358). It is at Esther Perfect's Century cottage--the proprietor's name alone signalling the idealism associated with the location--that the narrator, in a sense, grows into her adult profession and identity as a writer. In a way that the house on Deschambault Street in St-Boniface, Manitoba never could be, Century cottage represents an innocent childhood world: isolated, pastoral, and seemingly unmarked by history or politics. In this place, the narrator can put aside her anxieties--anxieties that have to do both with the exhausting battle to maintain her cultural and linguistic identity and with the nagging sense of duty she feels towards her mother, her siblings, and her own French community--and pretend, at least for a while, that the only things that matter are her own desires and the warm and easy relationship she develops with Esther and Esther's father. These people become her surrogate parents (indeed, the narrator calls Esther's father "Father Perfect"), but they are parents

who make no demands of the narrator. They not only encourage her to spend time and energy on her writing but facilitate her doing so. This is a home and a family situation that are *not* marked by poverty (except in a highly romanticized sense), illness, failure, and deeply-rooted personal and cultural anxiety. This is a perfect home.

In some ways, Century cottage is readily available and familiar to her, for its features and location are part of a recognizable European pastoral landscape that the narrator would have encountered in other narratives. In fact, a neighbouring cottage reminds the narrator of those depicted on the biscuit tins her mother used to keep. Like the "special world" Coe describes, this is a timeless world. Everything about Century cottage--including its two inhabitants--is beautiful, peaceful, and without history. It is a place where troubles and worries can be forgotten, at least temporarily. It is safe. The narrator allows herself to be absorbed by this place; she sinks into it as into a comfortable bed and permits her new "mother" to care for her body and her spirit. Here, then, the narrator finds the space in which she can begin writing, for Century cottage fulfills, as she herself notes in retrospect, "all I could possible desire" (309). And, significantly, her writing comes easily here.

The physical location of Century cottage is an integral part of its ability to function as an enabling and healing space. It is located in Upshire, near Epping Forest, a place that the narrator discovers by taking one of the "Green Line" buses that lead out of London. The lights of London glow in the evening sky, but the city is far enough away as to seem a separate world. Upshire is cut off and isolated, a small island of natural beauty and simple pleasures. Interestingly, the narrator associates her new surroundings with familiar ones:

> I could just as well have been in the bushlands of my own Manitoba as in one of the most populous countries in the world. But my surroundings pleased me greatly because I could imagine I'd never left home, hadn't

> flung myself so recklessly down the highways of the world and so still had all my opportunities in life and love ahead, undiminished. (301)

Indeed, the connection between this place and the narrator's Manitoba home is explicit. The village borders a plain the narrator sees as "a huge open plain much like the horizon of the Canadian West" (305). She even uses an image to describe the plain--"rolling away in magnificently broad, fluid waves" (305)--that is a typical description of the prairie. The narrator is comforted by this landscape, as she is comforted by the view--"a glimpse of sky and space" (325)--from her bedroom window at Century cottage, for it is a view that functions as a vital component in the narrator's conception of home. But it is a manufactured image, and the association between Manitoba and England is somewhat forced.[11]

Century cottage is, of course, a temporary and artificial home. Even its apparently timeless, pastoral setting can be seen to be discoloured around the edges. London is only a bus ride away. War threatens. Father Perfect lives the life of a gamekeeper in Eden, but he is the one who is preoccupied by the threat of the impending war in Europe. A photograph of Esther's brother, gassed in the previous war, sits on a shelf in the narrator's bedroom as a sober reminder of what is at stake. And the narrator herself knows that although she will always be welcome at Century cottage, her stay there will be of limited duration. Other worlds continue to make their demands on the narrator, and other concerns soon occupy her.

A carefree romp through the south of France is followed by an experience working with the Red Cross in Spain during the civil war. And shortly after this direct and painful experience of war, the narrator returns to Canada. She returns depressed and uncertain of what her future holds. She doesn't even know where she will live. At the time, Canada appears ugly to her: "How unloved our dear country seemed and still seems in comparison with the countrysides I had seen in Europe, all so tenderly cared for and kept so neat and clean" (404). Having been comforted by the order of Europe--a

sense of order that has to do both with the availability of a coherent, linear history and with the obvious human presence in all natural landscapes--Canada seems untamed and uncivilized. But this is an impression that is partly the result of feeling like a weary wanderer who, once again, has no easy ready-made home to go back to. It soon passes. Indeed, the narrator comes to enjoy the "horrid little room" (406) overlooking the Dorchester Street bus station in Montreal that she rents because it feels like such an appropriate place to be in while she gathers her resources:

> The atmosphere of wayfaring, confusion of tongues, and dizzy whirl of activity wasn't unpleasant. It suited my state of mind and was certainly more congenial, more friendly than some tranquil little street inhabited by equally tranquil people who have lived there for years. I always seem to have had the right place to stay at the right time. (406)

In Montreal she finds a way of coming home, of being home, that has something to do with place and something to do with a renewed sense of "oneness with my people, whom my mother had taught me to know and love in my childhood" (410).

The autobiography ends, then, on a note of homecoming and with this comes a feeling of affinity with her own cultural and linguistic heritage. It is a comforting end to a life story that has been interspersed with moments of the "sorrow" of the book's title, but it is also a romantic ending. The prodigal daughter does indeed return. She returns after having voyaged in strange (but not unfamiliar) lands, and she returns with new purpose and a sense of vocation. She returns, too, as an adult woman, now able to fully separate from her mother. Despite her mother's expectation, she does not return to Manitoba but takes up permanent residence in Quebec and pursues a career as a professional writer. Although she had to discover her "self" by going away, she will *be* her "self" in her own country. Indeed, she desires to be a writer in and of use to her community, her *French Canadian* community. In Roy's autobiography, the act of leaving home is represented as part of a process of leaving a past that is marked by her

parents' poverty and worry. But it is also an act of personal and cultural affirmation. In Quebec, she can claim her right to live--and write--in French. This is not a right that she could assume outside of Quebec, however. Although the narrator does, in one sense, come home to French Canada, she does not return to her original home, and Francophone Manitoba remains a site of frustrated desires and unrealized possibilities.

Revisiting Home: Autobiography as Critique

> So I gain truth when I expand my constricted eye, an eye that has only let in what I have been taught to see.
>
> Minnie Bruce Pratt
> "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart" (17)

In recreating first homes in language, autobiographers examine and interrogate the social and political conditions that shape those homes. For Roy, the concept of home is shot through with memories of the big skies and the broad horizon of the Manitoba prairie and the freedom and hope she associates with those images. But the concept of home is also bound to a history of the early colonists' failure to establish a viable French presence in the west, the refusal of the Manitoba government to protect language rights and the resulting deeply-felt sense of cultural and linguistic marginalization, as well as the burden of duty to her family, especially to her mother. Home, for Roy, must be *reproduced* elsewhere, temporarily in England but ultimately in Quebec, an environment that will nurture and sustain her identity both as a writer and as a French Canadian.

In chapter one I suggested (after Sneja Gunew) that postcolonial autobiography is about looking back in order to get somewhere else, a process of analytic retrospection that is necessary if we are not to repeat the same forgotten moments over and over again. One of the sites that requires the most intense scrutiny is the childhood home, for

home is rarely a place of Edenic, childish innocence; rather, home is the place where "I's" are first interpellated as subjects and where subjects learn what their own particular position in the world is supposed to be. It is the place where what Minnie Bruce Pratt calls the "constricted eye" is formed and where those things the eye/I is meant to see and believe (and not to see and believe) are taught. For the white settler subject, those lessons concern (among other things) who owns the land and how it is to be used, which languages and cultures are appropriate to the place, and how differences of race and gender are to be defined and managed.

Some of these lessons must be *unlearned* through a materially-grounded analysis of the conditions and limits of home. Such a process of reexamining home is particularly important for women, argue Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, for the idea of home has a particular power over and appeal to women (191). Throughout our histories, women have been expected to be at home and to stay at home, but, as Roy and countless women before and after her find out, home can be a claustrophobic, soul-destroying place. But it can also be a place where one's own power and privilege are not only learned but constantly reaffirmed. This is particularly true for white women--such as Minnie Bruce Pratt--who are raised to believe that they have a certain right of access to the world they happen to be born into. As Pratt's autobiographical narrative, "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart," reveals, such privilege is gained at the price of countless "exclusions and repressions which support the seeming homogeneity, stability, and self-evidence of 'white identity', which is derived from and dependent on the marginalization of differences within as well as 'without'" (Martin and Mohanty 193). It is one of the arguments of this study that white privilege must be *unlearned* as part of the process of decolonizing social relations within second world space.

Pratt proceeds to unlearn her own particular southern U.S. white privilege and the social ideologies that shaped and supported it by situating her personal experience in

the "geography, demography, and architecture of these communities . . . by discovering local histories of exploitation and struggle" (Martin and Mohanty 195).[12] The Australian autobiographer Jill Ker Conway, as I explore in detail below, attempts a similar analysis of her own position within an Australian social formation by self-consciously positioning her own life history within a larger history of European settlement and pastoral farming, the displacement of Aboriginal peoples that were its consequence, and the gendered divisions and distributions of Australian space. But if Ker Conway undertakes a broad-based feminist activity of locating--materially and historically--her own subjectivity, she also participates in a specifically Australian project.

John Colmer asserts that one of the distinguishing features of Australian autobiography is its creation of a sense of place that "conveys the very texture of living history" (12). The creation of a sense of place in autobiography functions both to delineate those particular places that individual writers have found to be of personal significance and to describe a social environment that is unique to Australia. Joy Hooton devotes an entire chapter of her study of Australian women's autobiographies of childhood, *Stories of Herself When Young*, to a critical investigation of how women autobiographers create a sense of place and how those narratives are an important (and all too often neglected) component of the history of the nation. Hooton argues that Australian women's "memoirs of place"--which she categorizes as a sub-genre of autobiography and finds in early pioneer women's diaries and journals as well as more contemporary autobiographical writings by white, migrant, and Aboriginal women--are crucial to a specifically Australian feminist project. These memoirs of place, suggests Hooton, not only reconstruct women's histories in all their local and material specificity, but they also provide an occasion for a feminist analysis of the basic social relationships that shape and uphold Australian nationhood. Early women wrote as witnesses to the process of settlement, and, although their stories were "consigned to the bric-à-brac of

nation-building" (Hooton 21), the texts they produced are important sources of information about the details and texture of women's daily lives. More than this, however, Australian women's memoirs of place provide "a flexible form for women writers of the self" (22) that has been used by women writers of both centuries. Hooton goes so far as to assert that "many autobiographies begin from the premise that the place's identity is the co-subject and place and self are presented as interdependent expressions of each other" (341).

While I would argue against the idea, advanced by both Colmer and Hooton, that autobiographical writing expresses, in a transparent, mimetic way, either place or "self," I would agree that the *language* of autobiography *represents* the "I" and place as interdependent subjects of the text. The discourse of place is an integral part of the discourse of the subject, and what becomes clear from women's writing in particular is that this discourse of place is inscribed in both large, mythic narratives of the nation and small, local narratives of home. As Hooton notes, it is impossible to read autobiographies and not realize that "there are many Australias" (341), for the features peculiar to particular regions and environments are frequently painstakingly described and invested with both emotional and cultural significance. Hooton's main concern is with describing the diversity of representations of place that she reads in women's autobiographies, and she suggests that "[p]reoccupied with knowing the native place as one knows an intimate relation, these writers have rarely paused to consider the national import of their knowledge and are generally alive to the interdependence of place and mind" (342). I argue that these representations often conflict with the official representations of place that have been integral elements of a powerful discourse of the nation. This conflict is an important constitutive feature of the autobiographical subjectivity represented in Jill Ker Conway's *The Road From Coorain*.

Jill Ker Conway's *The Road From Coorain*: An Undutiful Daughter of the Nation

One of the most striking aspects of Ker Conway's autobiography is that it does not open with an articulation of the personal. Indeed, the pronoun "I" does not even make an appearance in the text until the second chapter. Instead, the opening chapter, titled simply "The West," offers a detailed description of the topographical and botanical features of Ker Conway's particular home place--the western plains of New South Wales-- and an historical analysis of how the area was colonized, settled, and turned into pastoral grazing land. Thus, Ker Conway's text could be said to participate in a masculine tradition of Australian autobiographical writing delineated by John Colmer, a tradition where autobiography is actually "refracted social history" (4). But this strategy also stresses the point that there can be no autobiographical "I" divorced from a geographical and social context. The opening chapter historicizes one woman's experience and situates her particular story within a broader context of the constitution of white settler Australian subjectivity, and reading the autobiographical "I" through this context makes it possible to then open up the subjectivity that it represents to scrutiny. To analyze the features of white settler subjectivity is a somewhat more difficult undertaking than to analyze subjectivities marked by more visible signs of race, language, or ethnicity because this is a subjectivity that has been represented as normative. It requires such an interrogation, however, for this is the very subjectivity that has been consolidated and secured through discursive histories characterized by the oppression and exclusion of others.

Ker Conway's only access to difference is through a discourse of gender, a discourse that underpins the whole autobiography, for it is the particular place of women within a certain formulation of Australian social space--a formulation that can be traced to the specific region and way of life in which Ker Conway locates her original home--that is the focus of the autobiography. At one level, Ker Conway's text again seems to follow the conventions of a male tradition of autobiographical writing. Its central

narrative is the classic male story of the individual who triumphs over great odds and makes good. Usually, as both Gabrielle Roy and Jill Ker Conway find out, this "making good" can only be achieved by leaving both mother and motherland, leaving home, family, community, and the social conventions and restrictions that they represent.[13] But this is a masculine model of individuation and separation that has a very long history in western literature. It is embodied in both male autobiography, beginning with Saint Augustine's *Confessions,* and in the closely-related bildungsroman typified by James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Shirley Neuman argues that a woman writer's use of this conventional narrative can be read as an assertion of agency in that "stealing a plot that doesn't 'belong' to them" is one way of enabling the telling of an "unofficial" woman's story that would otherwise be effaced ("Writing Other-wise"). Writers such as Roy and Ker Conway, argues Neuman, "effect agency by appropriating the male plot to a woman's ends" ("Writing Other-wise"). Certainly, for Ker Conway to situate her own personal narrative within a narrative of colonization and settlement is to situate a woman's story within a historical discourse that has usually been read, within the social and historical context of Australia, as male territory.

Of course, there are good reasons why women's stories have been excluded from the official histories of pastoral farming in which Ker Conway's own family participates. After all, it was men who were granted or sold the land--Ker Conway's father was granted land in 1929 as half pay for his service as a soldier in WWI--and it was men's business to work the land, raise the livestock, and see to the processing and marketing of the final products. This autobiographical text reenacts a familiar colonial narrative of life in the bush, and Ker Conway's own family business of sheep rearing represents an enterprise whose significance within the context of Australian nation-building can hardly be overstated. For the settlers of the western plains of Australia in the early years of the twentieth century, only two places really mattered: "the bush, and the metropolis at the end of the railway line where the wool was sold" (Ker Conway 14). Sheep and

the men who worked with them--the boundary riders, drovers, and shearers of the outback myths--are legendary in Australian culture.[14] The whole enterprise fuelled not only a national economy, with the wool going to supply the thriving textile mills of northern Europe, but also a cultural mythology. The figure of the pastoral bush worker, in particular, gave Australia a distinctive identity that consolidated both its characteristic values and its position in relation to the British empire. Richard White comments that "[l]ike the furhunter of Canada and the backwoodsman of the United States, [the pastoral bush workers] had been in the vanguard of white settlement of new frontiers: they had entered an alien landscape and made it profitable" (103). It was men who turned "empty" space into usable place. It was men who *made* Australia.

But to see Australia--and particularly Australia as represented by the bush--as a place that *needs* making is to subscribe to a particular ideology of place. It is to enter into a specific colonialist discourse founded on the binary opposition of city and bush in the "new world." In spite of the fact that most of Australia's population lives in the coastal cities, the bush--as sign and myth--has persistently been mobilized to represent Australian identity. Richard White reveals that the artistic and literary representations of the bush which gained iconic status within Australian culture were actually created by a group of male bohemian intelligensia who had little, if any, first-hand experience of rural life (97-109). Representations of the bush and its inhabitants are, then, inventions consciously produced in order to stand in for the "real" Australia. The need to *make* an identity based on such representations of place, however, is an important part of the process of settlement. Phil Roe explains (drawing on the concept of "spatial history" developed by Paul Carter) that it is not the bush itself that structures identity, but the ways in which an imported settler language *constructs* the bush as a place available for occupation:

> The myth and legend of the bush, in its oppositional relation to the city, is, in large part, an attempt to map onto this alien other the trace of

> colonial and imperial desire. The city is civilised, mapped, framed, law, language--it is always already knowable and known within discourse. The bush always exceeds the bounds of conventionalised discourse, always resists the conventional frames of mapping, law and language. The myths and legends of the bush function as an attempt to colonise, to find ways of occupying this other; as though investing it with an entire European lexicon will transform it from unknowable space into that which is knowable and containable, in short to redefine it as *place*. (29, emphasis in the original)

Through language, then, an alien and unfamiliar space becomes a habitable place, a home. And it is also through language that the individual settler finds his place as a national subject. How one is positioned in relation to this discourse of place is an integral component of one's subjectivity. Of course any narratives of national identity, are best understood, as Chris Tiffin remarks, as "a complex of competing narratives" ("Imagining" 46), and no single image can ever fully stand in for either the place itself or its inhabitants. The discourse of the bush does not totally contain Australian settler subjectivity. Nevertheless, the fact that myths of Australia which derive from ideas associated with the masculine economy of the bush are subject to challenge and analysis does not necessarily lessen their hegemony. These myths are very persuasive. They are also sources of self-positioning even if an individual's relation to the myths is oppositional and even if the myths themselves are constantly undergoing processes of revision and reimagination.

Kay Schaffer, in her study *Women and the Bush*, argues that women have an uneasy and ambivalent relation to this powerful myth of Australian national identity, but she is doubtful about the possibility of subverting the dominant nationalist discourses that position women as both subject and object in relation to the land. Initiating a semiotic analysis of Australian colonial writing that investigates both the dominant

signs of Australian culture and how those signs interpellate women and men as subjects of the nation, Schaffer demonstrates the pervasiveness of representations of the land as a feminine "other" to a normative male "self." Basically, Schaffer argues that land is feminized as both an object of desire, virgin territory to be taken, and an object of fear, a primal, cruel mother capable of assimilating its inhabitants and robbing them of a separate identity.[15] These representations have functioned, suggests Schaffer, to position the feminine within the discursive terrain of Australian nationalism, not as an actual figure of woman, but as a feminine principle that secures masculine subjectivity: "The landscape provides a feminine other against which the bushman-as-hero is constructed. Further, these narratives engage the reader in a process though which his or her own subjectivity is constructed" (52). This latter point is important, for it suggests that even if women are able to identify and analyze the structures of representation that have secured the male as normative and the feminine as "other" in Australian culture, they are still interpellated by these discursive structures. This, it seems to me, is the dilemma that the narrator of *The Road From Coorain* faces. Her training as an academic historian, as well her political commitments to Marxism and feminism, make her alert to the limited subject positions available to women who inhabit the Australian bush and how ideas of the land have contributed to the formulation of those subject positions, but she is not necessarily able to resist their coerciveness.

Certainly the narrator is conscious of the codes that define male and female roles. As she notes in the opening chapter, the bush ethos invokes a whole range of assumptions, attitudes, and behaviours associated with being male:

> A "real man" despised comfort and scorned the expression of emotion. The important things in life were hard work, self-sufficiency, physical endurance, and loyalty to one's male friends, one's "mates." Knowledge about nature, the care of animals, practical mechanics was respected, but

> speculation and the world of ideas were signs of softness and impracticality. (8)

The place and role of women in this world are equally clear. Isolated from or unable to pursue received "feminine" interests such as gardening, cooking, shopping, and social entertaining, settler women had to learn (or at least pretend to learn) attributes and attitudes that are closely modelled on those of men:

> The ideal woman was a good manager--no small task with only wood stoves, kerosene lamps, inadequate water, and the nearest store for canned goods fifty to a hundred miles away. She was toughened by adversity, laughed at her fears, knew how to fix things which broke in the house, and stifled any craving she might once have had for beauty. She could care for the sick, help fight a bushfire, aid a horse or a cow in difficult labor, laugh and joke about life's absurdities and reverses, and *like a man*, mock any signs of weakness or lack of stoicism in her children. (9, emphasis added)

The bush, in fact, is generally represented as no place for women. The only positive subject position available to women in the bush is that of the "Bush Mum," a woman who could cope with any disaster--natural or human--and provide a safe, comfortable domestic space for men and children. This figure is typified by the character of "the drover's wife," a figure that has been subject to many revisitings and revisionings in Australian culture.[16] As Anne Summers points out, however, this figure represents an idealization of women that fails to recognize the genuine hardships that women faced in the bush, hardships that included loneliness, illness, the danger of physical disasters such as floods and drought, attack by animals, and rape (312). Women in the bush are vulnerable, but the masculine codes that define subjectivity in that particular environment obscure, or at least minimize, the real dangers women face.

The narrator is conscious of her own mother's efforts to make a place for herself on the sheep station, and to some extent at least, her mother is a modern version of the "Bush Mum," a woman with valuable practical skills, including the ability to care for the sick and wounded (she is a trained nurse), and a willingness to make the best of her situation. However, the narrator also points out that because the domestic environment is the only place marked as hers, her mother is obsessive about her control over it and will not tolerate competition from other women, including any hired servants and including her own daughter. What this means to the narrator is that she is out of place the minute she is born. In fact she wonders why her parents wanted a girl child at all. With outdoors exclusively coded as male territory and indoors under the tight surveillance of her mother, what place is there for her?

As a small child, the narrator does manage to find accommodation, if only for a short time, by becoming an honorary boy. She is encouraged by her father to ride out on the station with him and to participate in the daily business of caring for the sheep. One of her proudest moments is when she is sent out alone to drove a herd of sheep. She is seven years old, too small to mount a horse without standing on a fence, but she manages the task and wins her father's approval. Her biggest achievement, however, lies not so much in performing the task well, but in undertaking it without comment or complaint. There are times when she is afraid out there on the station: "At first I was not quite secure enough in ego to cope with the space, the silence, and the brooding sky. Occasionally I would find myself crying, half in vexation at my small size and the pigheadedness of sheep, half for the reassurance of the sound" (42). But the discourse of the family dictates that "it was shameful to weep" (42), and young Jill learns to hide her fear. For both Australian males and females, the most important lesson to be learned is how not to whinge.

The practical as well as emotional difficulties associated with inhabiting the bush, an environment that is represented as both alien and hostile to white settlers, are

central to the development of the narrator's life story in *The Road From Coorain.* As the narrator discusses in the opening chapter, the western plains are grasslands, edging on the interior desert regions that thrive or die according to the seasons and regular cycles of drought. This is also an environment that throughout Australian history has been characterized as insidiously, "naturally," malevolent. Like the prairies of western Canada, this is a vast, seemingly unbounded world that holds a promise of economic security and mastery over property: "Each settler could look out on the vacant horizon knowing that all he saw was his" (7). But it is also a world that is potentially threatening. This is an environment that has been traditionally perceived as requiring managing and taming. But it is a land that has largely resisted human attempts to landscape it, if "landscape" is understood in terms of European values associated with the aestheticization and domestication of nature. As Bruce Clunies Ross remarks, "[r]emoteness, desolation, uselessness and a sense of being on the edge of the unknown have been latent in the idea of Australia from the beginning and they contribute to that quality of indifference with which the environment is supposed to confront its white inhabitants" (227). And this is a discourse that the narrator repeats and reinscribes:

> On the plains, the earth meets the sky in a sharp black line so regular that it seems as though drawn by a creator interested more in geometry than the hills and valleys of the Old Testament. Human purposes are dwarfed by such a blank horizon. When we see it from an island in a vast ocean we know we are resting in shelter. On the plains, the horizon is always with us and there is no retreating from it. Its blankness travels with our every step and waits for us at every point of the compass. Because we have very few reference points on the spare earth, we seem to creep over it, one tiny point of consciousness between the empty earth and the overarching sky. (5)

In contrast to Gabrielle Roy's interpretation of the horizon as an image of boundless possibility, in Ker Conway's autobiography, the horizon is "blank," signifying not only the folly of human attempts to inhabit such an environment but also the impossibility of escaping its foreboding power.

The seeming indifference of the natural environment to human enterprises--indeed, human life--is a feature of an Australian imaginary that is an integral part of the narrator's cultural inheritance, but this notion also hits home in very personal and immediate ways. Her early childhood years are dominated and defined by the constant struggle to make a comfortable and viable home out of a difficult land. This is a period of her life defined by a drought that lasts eight years and dominates both the activities and the mood of the family. Year after year they are caught up in the constant struggle to keep the station going. They dig a well which will, hopefully, tap into underground artesian basins; they struggle to keep the sheep fed when the grass is all gone; they watch their mother's garden silt over and everything green turn to brown; and every day they confront the sheer tragedy of seeing living things all about them die. As the adult autobiographer, the narrator understands that the tragedy of the devastating droughts in the region is an inevitable result of human arrogance and stupidity. The grasslands of the western plains of New South Wales appeared to early settlers as a huge pastoral garden, but it was, in fact, a fragile ecological habitat that could sustain neither the kinds of animals settlers introduced into the area nor their numbers. The sharp hooves of millions of sheep and cattle destroyed the roots of vegetation and, thus, destroyed the anchor of the soil. When rain failed to come, as it regularly failed, valuable top soil was literally blown away. The drought does not destroy Coorain entirely, but it does destroy her father. He dies, with cruel irony, by drowning. Ostensibly his death is an accident, the result of his failed attempt to extend piping into a dam on the property, but in light of his deepening depression and because he had uncharacteristically visited her in her room very early that morning, the narrator knows that his death was most likely a

suicide. He had come to her that day to say goodbye. The narrator is obviously saddened by her father's death, but she also learns an unforgettable lesson from it: the place that is home can kill you.

Her father's death prompts the rest of the family to leave Coorain and move to Sydney. For all intents and purposes, this marks the end of the narrator's days as a country bush girl. Travelling overnight on the train to Sydney she moves from one world to another: "In the morning there was the odd sight of green landscapes, trees, grass, banks of streams--and an entirely different palette of colors, as though during the night we had journeyed to another country" (85). From this point on, the narrator is increasingly immersed in city life and the systems of formal education that will define the course of her future. Before he had died, her father had passed on a message to the narrator. "'Work hard, Jill,' he'd say. 'Don't just waste time. *Make something of yourself* . . . . 'Don't be like your brothers. Don't waste your time in school. Get a real education and get away from this damn country for good'" (64, emphasis in the original). It is a message that the narrator takes to heart. But living in the city and being subject to the structures of the Australian school system create a new set of conflicts for the narrator. Suddenly her world shrinks, defined now by school gates and city streets, and, ironically, she finds this world as "alien and intimidating" (87) as she had once found the bush. Lacking immunity to infections endemic to the city, she falls ill. She is also culturally isolated. At her first public school she is forced to socialize with other children who do not share her bush experience and who are familiar with an Australian popular urban culture that is foreign to her. The city, then, is not her place either.

Things improve when she moves to a private school for girls, a place she finds to be paradise in contrast to the public school largely because it is populated by country girls like herself, but now she enters a world that is only tenuously connected to its Australian setting. She receives a thoroughly colonial education at Abbotsleigh. The signs of deeply-rooted allegiance to the "parent" nation are everywhere around her, from

the maps that line the classroom walls and show all England's colonies coloured in red, to the English literature and history that they read, to the uniforms that they are required to wear.

> Woe betide the student caught shedding the blazer or gloves in public, even when the thermometer was over 100 degrees. She was letting the school down, behaving unbecomingly, and betraying the code involved in being a lady. Ladies, we learned, did not consider comfort more important than propriety in dress or manners. (101)

The narrator's school years represent her deeper immersion into an Australian culture that is utterly colonial and deeply gendered.

But it is when she is away from Coorain that the narrator begins to evaluate her relationship with the sheep station and the land that constitute her original home. From the perspective of distance--both temporal and spatial--she can consider the ecological disaster that the enterprise of sheep farming meant for the region. She can also contemplate the place and fate of the region's original inhabitants. As a child she notices the traces of Aboriginal peoples in the land, but she considers the traces of their history as either natural curiosities or as relics of a distant past. As her sense of impending disaster in the family deepens. for instance, she looks to the place and the past it contains as an escape: "Sometimes, needing to be alone, I would walk for hours, scanning the ground for aboriginal ovens, collecting quartz fragments, observing the insect life--anything to be away from the house and its overwhelming mood of worry" (65-66). But as an adult, she considers her own family's complicity in an ongoing process of white settlement that requires the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples. She thinks of the stone that served as the doorstep at Coorain and recognizes that it is a nardoo stone, used by Aboriginal peoples to grind native grain.

Later, a chapter titled "The Nardoo Stones" traces the development of the narrator's political consciousness. In this chapter, the narrator considers the history of

British imperialism and the ways in which British ideologies were transported--along with convicts and immigrants--to Australia and how those ideologies shaped social relations both among Australians themselves and between Australians and other peoples, especially Aboriginals and Asians. To the narrator, these ideologies are embodied in the architecture of Sydney University, an institution of learning modelled on Oxbridge styles and standards which "transcended Australia's geography [and was] a bearer of the cultural standards of 'home'" (153). But it is at the university where she develops a Marxist critical perspective that helps her to contextualize and analyze the imperialist assumptions and class relations that determined her own family's place within Australian culture:

> Was it true that we were monopolizers of land, that Shorty and all my other shearer friends were expropriated laborers? Were the family values of thrift and industry simply signs that we were bourgeois? Who were the rightful owners and users of the land I had always thought to belong to us? I began to wonder about the aboriginal ovens I had played with as a child, and the nardoo stones we had so heedlessly trodden upon as we entered and left the house. What had happened to the tribes which once used to hunt over our land? For that matter, where had those huge, pink, delicately hollowed stones been carried from to end up on Coorain? Why had they been discarded? (170-71)

Simply put, the narrator begins to interrogate and partly dismantle her own white bourgeois settler subjectivity, which she sees has been secured partly through the exclusion and exploitation of others.

But in the previous paragraph I had to write that the narrator can only "partly dismantle" her subjectivity because bringing such matters to consciousness does not necessarily alter the structures of privilege and oppression that uphold them. It is only the first step--an important one certainly, but only the very beginning of a much more

difficult process of actively working to change the social conditions that underpin and support the subjugation and exploitation of others in Australia. This larger and more challenging process is something that the narrator does not address and does not attempt. Her developing consciousness in the autobiography is liberal; but it is not radical.

Similarly, the narrator can only partly dismantle her gendered position within Australian culture. As a girl she was not really at home in the bush, but she is not much more at home in the urban, cosmopolitan, and intellectual environment associated with Sydney and the university either. She discovers that although the university itself might be open to women and the subject position of student available to her, when her apprenticeship is over, the larger cultural sphere will not allow her a space that matches either her interests or her training. On the contrary, various forces and pressures send the clear message that she is expected to mold herself to fit the roles conventionally considered acceptable for women.

One of these roles proves to be particularly burdensome. It falls to the narrator, as the only girl in the family, to care for her increasingly emotionally distraught and unstable mother. She is expected to be the dutiful daughter, to consistently put the care of others ahead of care for herself. Furthermore, she is expected to fulfill this role uncomplainingly, since the role of dutiful daughter is informed both by the discourse of gender and by the particularly Australian discourse of stoicism. This is a role that the narrator rebels against, even though her rebellion produces an enormous sense of guilt. "Daughters in Australia were supposed to be the prop and stay of their parents. Would I ever get away? Was it wrong to want to? How on earth could I set about doing it? How could I tell this woman who lived for me that I did not want to live for her" (151)? The narrator knows that to leave her mother means breaching firmly entrenched social codes. But, like Gabrielle Roy, who faces a very similar situation in the demands that her own mother's dependence makes on her, the narrator also knows that getting away is

necessary if she is to fulfill another promise made both to herself and to her father: the promise to make something of herself.

To the narrator, making something of herself means pursuing a professional career. She has always been bright, and her intelligence had won her approval and given her a certain status in her younger years. She discovers, however that intelligence is perceived as a liability in adult women: "My family and school friends agreed that I was 'brainy.' This was a bad thing to be in Australia. People distrusted intellectuals. Australians mocked anyone with 'big ideas' and found them specially laughable in a woman" (146). Attitudes produce and validate certain social behaviours and practices, and the underlying prejudice against intelligent, ambitious women that characterizes Australian society at this particular time determine the narrator's career options. Given her training and interest in history and international relations, she decides to apply for a position with the foreign office. But when two of her male friends, no more qualified than she, are successful and she is not, she knows that she has come face-to-face with sexism. Obviously, the foreign office does not consider a woman to be an appropriate representative of the nation.

But even before this important event, the narrator has been aware of the misfit between her own aspirations and those officially available to her. Her mother sends conflicting and unwelcome messages: while she encourages the narrator in her studies, she warns her not to take them too seriously and turn into a dreaded "bluestocking." A man whom she loves admires her intelligence and encourages her to pursue the kind of work she is interested in. Indeed, she falls in love with Peter Stone primarily because he does not require her, as other men had, to pretend that she is stupid. However, he too sends mixed messages. Eventually he begins to complain that she spends too much time on her work and not enough time on him and he drifts away. The narrator is left wondering "what it would be like to be loved for one's working self?" (181), a question that, I suspect, continues to haunt professional women in Australia and elsewhere.

The narrator is trapped. She is constantly negotiating between the demands of others--her mother and her lover--her commitment to her academic work, and her own personal development. She finds that her skills and training do not necessarily guarantee her access to a professional career. She also finds that her academic work does not win her the support of the Australian scholarly community, for the particular kind of history she wants to write, a history that considers patterns of pastoral settlement and "what difference the environment had made to the people who settled it" (185), is not something anyone else seems to be interested in. She is in an intolerable situation:

> I was headed for a traumatic confrontation between ambition, love, and duty. It was a contradiction Australians were taught to resolve through stoic adherence to duty. I knew that turning one's back on one's duty was dishonorable. So far as my ambitions were concerned I knew they were deviant. Women were supposed to be governed by love. (187).

But love itself is not enough--even the love of one's country.

The solution, then, is to leave Australia, and the narrator applies to begin a graduate program at an American university. She never returns to Australia to live. Indeed, the autobiography ends with the realization of the permanence of the move and the pain--but also necessity--of doing it.

> I was leaving because I didn't fit in, never had, and wasn't likely to. I didn't belong for many reasons. I was a woman who wanted to do serious work and have it make a difference. I wanted to think about Australia in a way that made everyone else uncomfortable. I loved my native earth passionately and was going into emotional exile, but there was no turn of political or military fortune which could bring me back in triumph. (236)

But what does escape achieve? For the narrator, escape opens up a world of personal and career opportunities that could not be realized in Australia, but it also requires her to

switch allegiances and to forfeit, at least in an emotional sense, her Australian citizenship. Further, although escape can be understood as a radical act of rebellion, it is not an act that challenges the social codes of Australia and the ideological structures that underpin them. To leave Australia is to fail to recreate it as a viable place for women.

The language of *The Road From Coorain* is the language of critique, a scholar's language. The narrator offers a particular reading of Australia at a particular time in history. She places her own life story within the context of larger nationalist narratives and, by doing so, she demonstrates how individuals are interpellated by broad cultural discourses. The autobiography reveals how inhabitants of a place are turned into subjects of the nation and how those subject positions are constituted by discourses of gender, race, ethnicity, and class. This critical perspective is useful in that it brings certain things to a general consciousness. But although the act of leaving the country can itself be interpreted as a resistance to the discourses of the nation, the autobiography actually serves to reinforce those discourses. The problem of women's entrapment within a masculine-defined Australia is not resolved in this text; rather it is simply eluded.

Recently I had lunch with a professor from another university and he asked me what my dissertation was about. When I explained the broad argument of the project he was enthusiastic, but when I named the primary texts that I was looking at he balked. Roy's and Ker Conway's autobiographies gave him particular trouble. Why would you be looking at a translation of a French Canadian text? he asked, genuinely concerned about my trespass into the territory of Comparative Literature and my own confessed inability to read the text in French. Didn't that distance from the original text worry me--or worry the members of my committee--he asked? And why Ker Conway, he wondered? For he didn't think of Jill Ker Conway as particularly Australian,

considering the fact that she has lived and worked in North America most of her life, indeed, that she is known for her career built both in the United States and in Canada.

I admit that I underwent a momentary crisis about my decision to use these autobiographies. Should I rewrite this entire chapter? But then I realized that it is the very troublesomeness of these texts and these lives that attracts me to them. Their authors are difficult to position within a clearly-demarcated "Canada" or "Australia" and this is precisely what I wanted to explore. Roy is obviously in the Canadian canon --most of her works have been translated into English, and she is well known and much loved both in Quebec and in the rest of the country. In her autobiography, however, she represents herself not as a preeminent writer and Canadian citizen (although perhaps that would have come in the unwritten next volume) but as a young girl and woman who had to struggle against a particular social and linguistic inheritance that positioned her as outsider in relation to the dominant formation of Canadian culture. Her autobiography is about feeling "other" at home and about her attempts to find a place in which to belong. My own distance from Roy's Canadian experience was something that I wanted to think about in this study. I wanted to think about how particular places come to be seen and felt--indeed lived--as home. Similarly, Ker Conway's autobiography is about why she had to leave Australia, about why Australia at a particular moment in its history could not provide her with a home. And although most of the years of her adult life are lived elsewhere, the subject positions that she struggled to resist were shaped in Australia.[17] *In these autobiographies, the narrators focus on the places where they were born and raised, the local and national histories that inform those places, and the particular discourses--some to be internalized; some to be resisted--that they learned there.*

These autobiographers, white settler women who are conscious of their own troubled relations with the norms of the dominant social formations that shape their

homes, are only partly aware of how they are, nevertheless, privileged. Ker Conway certainly begins to unpack the lessons of her subjectivity, and she gestures towards a politicized understanding of the oppressions and exclusions that are part of her home and cultural inheritance; however, she cannot give up that privilege. She can only take it elsewhere. Roy represents herself as colonized by an Anglo-Canadian society, but she does not consider how her own family history of colonization and settlement marks her as complicit with other structures of oppression, particularly of Native and Métis peoples. Both autobiographers create narratives that are at once intensely personal and carefully situated within specific cultural contexts, but neither moves beyond critique. Neither imagines how their homes might be made differently.

Notes

[1] Two collections of essays, *A Sense of Place in the New Literatures in English* and *A Sense of Place: Essays in Post-Colonial Literatures*, edited by Peggy Nightingale and Britta Olinder respectively, are particularly focused on matters of home and place in postcolonial writing. See also Andrew Gurr's *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature*. Paul Foss's *Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australia* is an important interdisciplinary collection that considers the production of Australia as home and challenges notions that Australia is a geographically- and culturally-unified space.

[2] Lee is concerned both with Canada's colonial history and its contemporary neocolonial relation to the United States.

[3] The narrator revisits her childhood home in the south of England. She goes to see Julia, who was Poppy's friend and the mother of her own friend, Henrietta, who had died as a child. Poppy travelled to India. The narrator emigrated to Australia. But Julia remained where she had always been. She has lived all her life in the same house. And she becomes, for the narrator, the figure most closely associated with "the image . . . of the mother that goes with motherland" (239).

[4] The idea that autobiography is written out of a desire to make sense of the often chaotic experiences of one's early life is one of the founding assumptions of autobiography criticism. See Susanna Egan, Georges Gusdorf, James Olney (especially *Metaphors of Self*), and Roy Pascal.

[5] Coe's study, nevertheless, focuses mainly on European and American autobiographies; his discussion of Australian texts is almost the only exception. Coe traces the origins of "the Childhood" through a western tradition of autobiographical writing and locates its emergence as a recognizable literary form in nineteenth-century France. He states that "the Childhood is a genre which presupposes a sophisticated culture. It is inconceivable among primitives; even in the contemporary Third World, it

emerges only in imitation of culturally more advanced models" (40). Gusdorf makes a similar argument.

[6] See his *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention.*

[7] Roy discusses her love for the landscape of her childhood and the ways in which it influenced her writing in her essay "Mon héritage du Manitoba," published in a special issue of *Mosaic* devoted to Manitoba writers.

[8] In a classic novel of the Canadian prairie, Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House*, the protagonists also discover that the horizon has its limits. The small town in which the Bentleys live is named "Horizon," but it is a town characterized by stagnation and claustrophobia. As Kroetsch so aptly puts it, "the horizon itself, on a great sheet of prairie, becomes boundary" ("Reading Across" 342).

[9] Comparative studies of English and French literatures in Canada, such as E.D. Blodgett's *Configuration: Essays in Canadian Literatures"* and Sylvia Söderlind's *Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction*, have tended to construct Canada on a two nations model. Although important challenges to this model are made by ethnic and aboriginal writers, the model itself presupposes a unity of English identities and French identities that effaces regional and even linguistic diversity. Roy's *Enchantment and Sorrow* problematizes any notion of French Canada as a homogenous entity and reminds readers that Quebec does not have exclusive claim to being a colony of an Anglo-dominant Canada.

[10] See Agnes Whitfield for an analysis of how this central relationship is related to a broader feminist context of women's writing.

[11] I am grateful to Paul Hjartarson for pointing this out to me.

[12] An illustration from Pratt's text is useful here. Pratt recalls her father taking her up to the roof of the courthouse in their town when she was eight years old. He had wanted to show her a particular view that had been important to him and the other men

in the family. This view represents her white, southern, Christian, middle-class inheritance. From her adult perspective, Pratt remembers those buildings she would have seen from up on that roof (churches, a bank, government buildings), but she also now recalls those that would have been obscured from her view (the sawmill and the houses in which black and white millworkers lived). She recalls that she was afraid of the height and that her father was disgusted by her fear. She cannot "take the height" (16) as a child, as her father wishes her to, because she is a girl. But she also cannot "take it" as an adult because she can no longer fully assume the right to power and privilege that comes with it. Nevertheless, Pratt knows that

> I was shaped by my relation to those buildings and to the people in the buildings, by ideas of who should be working in the Board of Education, of who should be in the bank handling money, of who should have the guns and the keys to the jail, of who should be *in* the jail; and I was shaped by what I didn't see, or didn't notice, on those streets. (17 emphasis in the original)

Through recalling and analyzing such relations, Pratt *unlearns* some of the dangerous lessons she was taught at home.

[13] Bronwen Levy associates this narrative in Ker Conway's autobiography with an unexamined tendency on the part of some women writers to "blame the mother," and she suggests that the "psychological residue" of such strategies produces other blindnesses, in Ker Conway's case, a blindness to how class (and I would add race) privilege might have benefitted the "birth of the daughter" as independent, successful woman (161).

[14] See Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend*. Although Ward's thesis has been refuted by many commentators, the veracity of the legend, as Ward himself points out in the foreword to the second edition, is not the point. Rather, the bush worker is an iconic

sign that circulates within Australian culture. It stands in for a whole history of relations both between men and the land and among men themselves.

[15] See also Annette Kolodny and Gillian Rose for discussions of the representation of landscape as feminine. Kolodny considers the trope of the land as female in American literary texts; Rose analyzes iconic representations of women's place within pictorial representations of landscape.

[16] "The Drover's Wife" is a short story by Henry Lawson, a writer who is considered by many commentators on Australian literature to be the father of Australian nationalist writing. His story has been revisited and reinterpreted by other Australian writers. Barbara Baynton's story "The Chosen Vessel" is perhaps the earliest response to Lawson. The contemporary artist Russell Drysdale painted an ironic "portrait" of The Drover's Wife to which Murray Bail responds in his short story of the same title.

[17] At the time of writing, Ker Conway's sequel to *The Road From Coorain* has just been published. Entitled *True North*, this second autobiography deals with Ker Conway's training and experiences as a feminist academic working in the United States and Canada. Thus, unlike Roy who died before she could continue the narrative of her life, Ker Conway does eventually write the story of her career. Interestingly, Australia is almost entirely absent in this second text.

Chapter Four

Multicultural Neighbourhoods: Accommodating Diverse Subjects

> Do not make the commonly made error that it is a people that we abhor, be clear that it is systems and processors [sic] which we must attack. Be clear that change to those systems will be promoted by people who can perceive intelligent and non-threatening alternatives. Understand that these alternatives will be presented only through discourses and dialogue flowing outward from us, for now, because we are the stakeholders. We need the system to change. Those in the system can and will remain complacent until moved to think, and to understand how critical, change is needed at this time for us all. Many already know and are willing to listen.
>
> Jeannette Armstrong
> "The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing" (145)

Written by someone who is part of an oppressive system based on white privilege but who is genuinely willing to listen and to work for social change, this chapter is dedicated to the efforts of writers who attempt to imagine Canada and Australia as truly decolonized places. In the previous two chapters I discussed the ways in which different subjects within these second world spaces could not find easy and comfortable accommodation within their own homes. Differences of gender, race, language, and ethnicity shape the subjectivities of these autobiographers and mark their marginalization in relation to dominant social formations. Nevertheless, differences among subjects and degrees of oppression must also be recognized, and it must be stated that Malouf, Roy, and Ker Conway occupy positions of relative power and centrality in comparison to aboriginal writers. The two autobiographers I consider in this chapter, Sally Morgan and Lee Maracle, are both acutely self-conscious of the colonization of aboriginal peoples by dominant settler societies, and partly their autobiographies are analyses and critiques of these social formations. But these autobiographers, it seems to

me, do more than critique. They begin the important process of imagining different social and personal realities. As Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin point out, "[t]o decolonise is not simply to rid oneself of the trappings of imperial power; it is also to seek non-repressive alternatives to imperialist discourse" (*Decolonising* 12). This chapter considers how a model of subjectivity, based on the idea of the multicultural neighbourhood, might provide a viable alternative to subjectivities that can now generally be categorized as either "colonizer" or "colonized" within second world spaces. It also considers the specific role of autobiography in formulating such alternative subjectivities, and the ways in which Morgan's and Maracle's texts provide important blueprints for how such work might proceed.

My argument in this chapter is that the self-representations of Sally Morgan and Lee Maracle can be located within a larger political project of decolonization that seeks to formulate emancipatory social relations among second world citizens of different cultural backgrounds. These autobiographies subvert the hegemony of the tradition of white western culture upon which Euro-Canadian and Euro-Australian autobiographical subjectivities are based, and they gesture towards ways in which subjectivity in these locations might be thought of differently. These differences are subtle and challenging. Morgan's *My Place* and Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* are both autobiographies that represent subjectivity not as a given but as a process. In these texts, subject positions change and shift over time and space. Further, these texts, particularly Sally Morgan's, refuse the conventional western male model of subjectivity based on individuation and separateness and emphasize, instead, the relatedness and interconnectedness of people--a shift that is fundamental if we are ever to decolonize our minds and find areas of alliance and coalition among different people. Both texts recognize that relationships do not necessarily happen naturally but must be worked for, and they suggest that the necessary starting point of that work is a critical analysis of one's own history. Each takes seriously Gloria Anzaldúa's suggestion that "[h]er first

step is to take inventory. . . . [To ask] [j]ust what did she inherit from her ancestors?" (82). While Morgan's text is about recovering a repressed history, Maracle's autobiography, a republished text that engages with an earlier version of her life story, dramatizes the fact that history is not static, nor is our perspective of it. Maracle implicitly argues that there is a need to constantly go over the same territory in working out and working through our subjectivities.

I read Sally Morgan's *My Place* and the new edition of Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* as postcolonial autobiographies. I do so, however, knowing that there is some debate--particularly in North America--about the validity of naming writing by aboriginal peoples "postcolonial." To evoke this naming would seem to deny the material and political reality of aboriginal peoples in both Canada and Australia, and to imply that their colonial subjugation has ended--or is near ending--whereas this is clearly not the case. There has been no triumphant moment of liberation and independence for either people. On the contrary, the Canadian state continues to determine and control the lives of Native peoples through the Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs.[1] The Canadian federal government--with its seventeen ways of defining an "Indian"--still decides who is "status" and who is not and what the rights of "status" and "non-status" Natives will be. It still dictates how Natives govern themselves through the Band councils. Non-Natives still occupy and "own" the greater portion of Native land, and hundreds of treaties still have not been honoured (Mercredi and Turpel 81). Similarly, the Australian state continues to exert paternalistic control over the lives of Aboriginal peoples through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, established by the federal government in the 1970's. Unlike the Canadian situation, the Australian state did not negotiate treaties or establish a national system of reserves for Aboriginal peoples as part compensation for the seizure of their land. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act applies only to the Northern Territory and to those Aboriginal tribal groups who can prove traditional title to the land, and only three states--South Australia,

Western Australia, and New South Wales--have developed land trusts for Aboriginal reserve lands (Weaver 206). For the most part, Aboriginal peoples in Australia remain landless, although more land claims cases are being settled now than ever before.[2] In both countries, moreover, large numbers of aboriginal peoples live outside their traditional or reserve areas in urban centres, and these people do not have the same access to the special privileges granted to traditional Aboriginal and Natives who are considered more authentic by white governments that like to have differences between "us" and "them" clearly defined. In both Canada and Australia, whether they live in urban centres or on the reserve, whether they are "traditional" or "modern," whether they are "full blood" or "half caste," the original inhabitants live as oppressed minorities--as colonized peoples--in their own lands.

Aboriginal writers in Canada frequently (though not always or necessarily) directly address their condition as colonized peoples. In her prefatory essay to *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada*, for instance, Emma LaRocque comments on the similarity between the experiences of Native peoples in Canada and those of indigenous peoples of Tunisia, as described by Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (xix). She asserts that "much of Native writing, whether blunt or subtle, is protest literature in that it speaks to the processes of our colonization: dispossession, objectification, marginalization, and that constant struggle for cultural survival expressed in the movement for structural and psychological self-determination" (xviii). In its impetus to resist the ideologies and systems of colonialism, then, aboriginal writing can be considered postcolonial writing, especially if we understand "postcolonial" to mean writing that specifically addresses "the lingering legacy of the imperial/colonial relation in all its positive and negative aspects," as Brydon and Tiffin suggest (*Decolonising* 13). Thomas King, however, argues that to call Native writing "postcolonial" is inappropriate, for the term assumes that the starting point for a discussion of Native literatures is the arrival of Europeans in North America (11),

indeed, that the "struggle between guardian and ward is the catalyst for contemporary Native literature, providing those of us who write with method and topic " (12). King objects to the tendency of critics to ignore other specifically indigenous concerns, both formal and thematic. Worst of all, he argues, a postcolonial critical practice often obscures the long tradition of Native oral storytelling from which contemporary writing draws and which not only predates the colonial encounter but survives in spite of it (12).

Lee Maracle herself has quarreled with the term "postcolonial." Maracle argues that Native literatures continue to be colonized by the alien critical strategies practised in the academy: "Our words, our sense and use of language are not judged by the standards set by the poetry and stories we create. They are judged by the standards set by others" ("The 'Post-Colonial' Imagination" 13). Genuine understanding and communication between Native and non-Native worlds, she argues, cannot take place until the systemic colonialism that informs Canadian society is both recognized and deemed unacceptable by *all* Canadians, and this includes non-Native writers and academics reflecting self-consciously on how they treat and respond to Native cultural materials. Maracle sees non-Native academics as themselves potential colonizers, and she refuses to accept the implication that just because something called postcolonial literary studies now exists that this means real social change will follow.

Maracle is, of course, right. The cultural work of decolonization must be the concern of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples, including academics and non-academics, in both Canada and Australia. Decolonization must be understood as a collaborative process undertaken by the many diverse peoples who inhabit these nation spaces. The urgent question, I want to suggest, is this: how can white settler European Canadians and Australians be motivated to do the work that decolonization requires? How can members of the dominant group be encouraged to give up some of their power in order to truly make space for those who are currently marginalized in our societies?

Simon During acknowledges that a postcolonial critical practice, especially as it has been mobilized in readings of second world cultures, does do important social work in that it can initiate a shift in perspective and foster a change in attitudes. Postcolonial studies have made it impossible not to think of the history and consequences of European imperialism as it was enacted by white settlers in places such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. During is justifiably skeptical about whose interests postcolonial theory, as it is managed by intellectuals within the academy, serves; nevertheless, he also recognizes that one beneficial outcome of a postcolonial critical practice might be that such an approach deconstructs the authority of white settler subjectivity in second world locations:

> . . . it is possible for white postcolonial theorists to unsettle their own rather than anyone else's legitimations and foundations, though this will necessarily involve knowing and saying more about colonized peoples than is traditional for white scholarship. This is particularly important when it becomes strategically apposite for white academics and intellectuals to impose a silence on themselves because their "true" utterances and institutional practices might harm those "others" whose interests they would serve. In settler-capitalist ex-colonies such as Australia and New Zealand, this job of auto-analysis mainly means considering history in terms of the cultural and discursive positions available to what I will call the "settler subject" (350-51)

During suggests that white settler subjects engage in "auto-analysis" as a theoretical and critical practice, for such a practice could facilitate the inscription of different futures for second world nations. In part, postcolonial literary studies have already initiated this kind of "auto-analysis." During notes, for instance, that up until this point, literary histories have tended to focus on "the colonizer's creation of a new national literature.

Now, in the postcolonial moment, we can begin to understand the symptoms and strategies of repression rather than just repeating them" (351).

But such an analysis is only possible because of the inscriptions of contestatory voices by diverse subjects inhabiting postcolonial spaces, of which aboriginal peoples are one important constituency. I am convinced that one way that decolonization of these spaces might be achieved is through white settler readers actively attending to and engaging with the words and works of aboriginal writers. Not all agree. Terry Goldie, for instance, fearing that academic interpretation is just another way of colonizing others, argues that the only response the majority critic should make to Native literary writing is one of "very loud silence" (qtd. in Robertson 53).[3] But it seems to me that this is an inadequate response. Better that the majority critic engage with this material so as not to risk, as Kateryna Olijnyk Longley puts it, "perpetuating the negation of Aboriginal culture by ignoring the new work and remaining silent" ("Autobiographical Storytelling" 370). The key is to initiate dialogue and cultural exchange.

Edward Said, along with a number of critics working with materials from cultures not their own, cautions that "thinking about cultural exchange involves thinking about domination and forcible appropriation: someone loses, someone gains" (*Culture* 195). Indeed, we must remain ever vigilant of the power relations that necessarily impinge on the cultural exchange that happens between aboriginal writers and non-aboriginal critics. However I must believe that it is possible to engage in productive and non-oppressive exchanges across cultures, because if I don't at least attempt to cross the bridge we will always remain separate and divided. Nevertheless, we must also remember that our knowledge both about ourselves and about others is partial, always mediated by culture and language. Stephen Slemon outlines the parameters of the reader/critic's knowledge:

> If we cannot "know" in positivist terms the cultural *object* of post-colonial literary representation, we nonetheless *can* come to some kind of

> awareness of how it is that the post-colonial text positions itself *against* colonialist power. And we can come to know how it is that *specific* structures of post-colonial representation take on efficacy and agency in the continuing effort to decolonise cross-cultural relations and to enable genuine forms of emancipatory social change. ("Post-colonial Writing" 60, emphasis in the original)

Colonial rule required the separation of the races so that white Europeans could justify their authority over aboriginal peoples and their appropriation of geographical territory. The time is now upon us when we must all participate in the process of healing the rift between communities and creating a different history.

For people like me who occupy positions of relative privilege, the idea that I have something to learn from colonized others is an idea that I have to work to accept. I have been told all my life that the way "we" think and act is the "right" way. How do I, with my white skin and my academic credentials, willingly assume a position of non-authority? Janice Gould reminds me that the very ground on which I live and work is marked by violent histories of theft and genocide: "It is obvious that there is not a university in this country [she means the U.S.] that is not built on what was once native land. We should reflect on this over and over, and understand this fact as one fundamental point about the relationship of Indians to academia" (81-82). I try to keep this in mind. But I also try not to let this thought paralyze me.

This past Fall I signed up for a university extension course on "Native Women's Writing." I suspected that the course would attract some Native and Métis participants, and I wanted to hear what aboriginal students had to say about literature that came out of their own communities. I also wanted to put myself in a situation where I was not automatically at home, where my particular academic skills might be considered either irritating or irrelevant, and where my views were likely to be challenged. The class was

racially mixed. At the first meeting we each identified ourselves in terms of our racial heritage. It seemed necessary to do so, to locate ourselves as occupying certain speaking positions.

We sat around a table. And tension sat down with us. Who could say what? When was it my place to speak; when was it my place to shut up? Should I check my graduate school training--my theories, my jargon, my critical methodologies--at the door? One white student tended to dominate discussions. Should I tell her to shut up? How best to respond when the comments of some of the Native students became very personal? Sometimes, when the material hit close to home, someone would begin to cry. How to behave? Was there a place for pain and anger in the classroom? Why did the presence of such strong emotions make me feel so uncomfortable? These are some of the issues that I wrestled with every week.

What did I learn from the experience of taking this course? I learned that the relationships between me and the other students in the class--both Native and non-Native--had to be constantly renegotiated as we confronted issues of racism, colonialism, authenticity, self-esteem, cultural appropriation, and the politics of publishing, writing, reading, and education. I was horrified to discover that it was possible for me, no matter how careful or "aware" I was, to think and say racist things. I learned that even though we tried to help each other feel comfortable, the situation shifted night after night, and the mood in the classroom changed. There was no way for me to secure a single position from which to consistently think and speak. And, perhaps most importantly, I learned that a six-week night course was not enough time to sort through these and other difficult questions and issues. In fact, I learned that there is never enough time, for our positions in relation to each other had to be constantly reexamined and renegotiated. I was not going to figure out my political location once and for all. Rather, I learned that I had to be prepared to think about it all the time.

Politics is a process, and cross-cultural communication requires sustained effort. There are no ready-made scripts, no short cuts.

Before I move on to my readings of Maracle's and Morgan's texts, I want to address the particular role that autobiography has to play in formulating alternative subjectivities and to assess various models of radical subjectivity, already proposed, that are at least potentially emancipatory. In doing so, I recognize the important work that feminists and women of colour have already done in thinking through what a liberatory social politics might look like. I also, at least implicitly, recognize that no matter what our social group or point of personal identification, there is much to be gained from listening to and learning from others.

The Social and Political Work of Autobiography

> [Autobiography] is the practice of the imaginary in its largest sense, for without vision we can't see where we're going or even where we are.
>
> Daphne Marlatt
> "Autobiography and Fictionalysis" (15)

As Kateryna Olijnyk Longley notes, with particular reference to Australian Aboriginal women's autobiography, autobiographical writing has a particular role to play in the processes of personal and social decolonization. Speaking from marginal positions, says Longley, Aboriginal women

> are reconstructing the past in their own ways, challenging the entrenched history-book accounts. They are also redefining themselves in the present as crucial agents of Australia's dawning postcolonial understanding. Autobiography provides an ideal medium for this process because it has the authority of a primary historical record while enjoying

> the freedom of an unashamedly personal vision. ("Autobiographical Storytelling" 371)

Autobiographical practices by aboriginal and other minority writers offer opportunities to challenge dominant historical records that have silenced other stories. They also, comments Sidonie Smith, "become occasions for the staging of identity, and autobiographical strategies occasions for the staging of agency" ("Autobiographical Manifesto" 189). Such writing is motivated by and serves more than the individual writer's personal needs; such writing is community-oriented political activity. It engages in very real cultural wars.

Smith suggests that the autobiographical manifesto is an especially productive autobiographical strategy in that it not only exposes and contests the sovereignty of hegemonic discourses and structures but also encourages the formulation of "an expressly political collocation of a new 'I'" ("Autobiographical Manifesto" 189). Thus, autobiography can be understood as writing that does not just look backwards but looks forwards too: "the 'I' writes under the sign of hope" ("Autobiographical Manifesto" 194). Writing autobiographically provides an occasion where the "I" can be imagined into "a potentially liberated future distanced from the constraining and oppressive identifications inherent in the everyday practices of the *ancien régime*. Thus, while the manifesto looks back in what Teresa de Lauretis terms 'the critical negativity' of theoretical critique, it also gestures forward in 'the affirmative positivity of its politics' to a new set of spaces for identity" ("Autobiographical Manifesto" 194-95). In this statement by a feminist critic of autobiography, I hear echoes of Sneja Gunew's formulation of postcolonialism: postcolonial writing looks back not to repeat but to end up somewhere else.

Importantly, autobiographical texts are potential sites of new identifications both for those who write them *and* for those who read them. Readers of autobiography frequently have the experience of either identifying their own experiences with those of

the narrator or, perhaps, of wanting to emulate, or at least learn from, the narrator's experiences. And autobiographers are conscious of the effect their narratives have on their readers. Perhaps especially in religious confessions, such as Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, writers of autobiography have often represented their own subjectivities as *exempla* and their autobiographies as occasions for instruction (Shumaker 13). Even if the autobiographer represents his life as troubled and his character as flawed, there is the implicit desire that in writing about himself the autobiographer will serve some greater good. This is evident even in Jean Jacques Rousseau, one of the most solipsistic of autobiographers, who expresses the expectation that other men, through reading his *Confessions*, will be encouraged to examine themselves in comparison: "Let each one of them groan at my depravities, and blush for my misdeeds. But let each one of them reveal his heart at the foot of Thy throne with equal sincerity, and may any man who dares, say 'I was a better man than he'" (17).[4] The oppressed have a particular interest in offering their lives as *exempla*, because their life histories bear witness to intolerable social conditions, and they furnish political ideologies and strategies with useful and necessary hard evidence. Slave narratives, for instance, such as Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave Related by Herself*, served an important role in the Abolitionist movement in that they not only substantiated accounts of atrocities and injustices, thus adding fuel to the argument that slavery should be abolished on moral grounds, but they also provided a point of identification for sympathizers. By appealing to the reader's sense of common humanity --or common womanhood as in Harriet Jacobs's case--the autobiographical text could inspire outrage and perhaps political action on the part of the white reader, who, presumably, would recognize her own complicity with an unjust system.

The point here is not that all readers necessarily identify with the autobiographical "I," but that the act of reading someone else's autobiography can help

readers reflect on their own subjectivities, even if their actual experiences differ widely from those narrated. Considering the position of the reader in her discussion of Latin American women's *testimonios,* Doris Sommer argues that the text interpellates readers "who identify with the narrator's project, and, by extension, with the political community to which she belongs" (118). Although the reader cannot identify with the narrator's experiences or imagine taking her place, "the map of possible identifications through the text spreads out laterally. Once the subject of the testimonial is understood as the community made up of a variety of roles, the reader is called in to fill one of them" (118). This process of analytic self-reflection and self-analysis is an integral part of the project of decolonization, for through undertaking an active review of one's own subjectivity--a process that forces all subjects to consider *how* they define themselves in relation to others, where those definitions come from, and how they might be changed--can new models of identity come into being. This process is important both for those who write and for those who read.

Identity Politics and Spatial Metaphors

> Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads.
>
> Gloria Anzaldúa
> *Borderlands/La Frontera* (87)

> "Change life! Change society!" These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space.
>
> Henri Lefebvre
> *The Production of Space* (59)

Henri Lefebvre's analysis of the social production of space has radical implications for the revolution that is decolonization. "Lefebvre insists that life should

be lived as a project and that the only intellectual and political project that makes sense is life" (Harvey, "Afterword" 431). Part of that project, asserts Lefebvre, involves *appropriating* space--by which he means thinking of space not as something empty, natural, simply *there* but as a network of physical manifestations, social practices, and mental formations--and actively *producing* a new space, one that corresponds to a radical politics of emancipatory identifications. Through the production of a space, says Lefebvre, subjects constitute themselves as groups; indeed, without such a space, it is impossible to identify oneself as a subject or to recognize other subjects within the group (416). Thus, in creating new subject positions, new ways of identifying ourselves, we must also think of newly-imagined spaces--spaces understood as simultaneously physical, social, and metaphoric. Such spaces have the potential to produce new realities, new ways of being in the world. But which comes first, the intolerable "real" conditions that force a new theory of space or a new theory that alters social conditions and presents new possibilities? Lefebvre argues for the simultaneity of political and imaginary processes:

> When institutional (academic) knowledge sets itself up above lived experience, just as the state sets itself up above everyday life, catastrophe is in the offing. Catastrophe is indeed already upon us. . . . On the other hand, who can grasp "reality"--i.e. social and spatial practice--without starting out from a mental space, without proceeding from the abstract to the concrete? No one. (415)

The concrete and the material coexist alongside the abstract and the theoretical; they inform one another.

Spatial approaches to the question of the human subject have already provided ways of articulating new subject positions. Kathleen M. Kirby offers some suggestions about why this might be so. Once the old Enlightenment model of the individual "self" has been rejected, on the grounds that it effaces differences of geography, culture,

gender, class, and so on, it becomes impossible *not* to think about how the subject is embedded in material situations--"real spaces," if you will. Space, argues Kirby, becomes *the* thing to consider, and it offers exciting possibilities:

> Space forms a medium for reconnecting us with the material, but it also maintains a certain fluidity, a mobility: If we are speaking of space in the abstract, it is susceptible to folding, division and reshaping. A space persists only as long as the coordinates holding it open are deliberately maintained, and the shapes and boundaries modeling space are, at least ideally, open to continual negotiation. Hence the optimism and anxiety of space in relation to identity in the modern, or postmodern, world. Recent criticism has taken up space as a flexible medium for marking out the properties of subjects without either getting mired in organic essentialisms or evaporating the concrete significance of political interests. (175)

Kirby makes a couple of important points here: first, because space cannot be experienced without at least two points of referene or coordinates, it is inherently *relational*, not absolute (see also Massey 152); second, space is malleable, plastic; it can be shaped and reshaped to constitute new positions. As bell hooks argues, "[s]paces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice" (152). Through acts of imagination, both new spaces and new ways of occupying them *as* subjects can be produced. Gillian Rose,[5] in making the case for a feminist geography, notes that

> Space itself--and landscape and place likewise--far from being firm foundations for disciplinary expertise and power, are insecure, precarious and fluctuating. They are destabilized both by the internal contradictions of the geographical desire to know and by the resistance of marginalized victims of that desire. And other possibilities, other sorts of geographies,

> with different compulsions, desires and effects, complement and contest each other. (160)

The challenge, then, is to think of both place and subjectivity differently.

As I have been arguing throughout this study, place--understood as both physical and cultural territory--in the second world locations of Canada and Australia has always been contested, and so it seems appropriate to rethink subjectivity in terms of new places, new geographies. Clearly such models of subjectivity are not to be thought of as corresponding to unique psychic structures. Rather, models of subjectivity offer sites of partial and provisional identifications; they can function as places from which to live, speak, and act. But if we can think of ourselves differently, we can also speak and act differently, and within the contested terrains of contemporary second world societies, the formulation of such alternative places and speaking positions might be considered urgent.

Gloria Anzaldúa and bell hooks are two writers engaged in the imaginative and political activity of formulating new subject positions by thinking about subjectivity in spatial terms. Their work has informed mine in important ways, although there are some differences between our approaches. We are each interested in formulating decolonized subjectivities, but Anzaldúa and hooks write as marginalized speakers from marginal positions at the edges of contemporary mainstream white American society. I, on the other hand, write as an insider who wants to reconfigure the shape of the mainstream itself. We each write from where we *are*. Anzaldúa and hooks formulate decolonized subjectivities *from* peripheral sites that are responsive to the needs and desires of those who already occupy the margins. Thus, they value the margins themselves as viable places within which to live and from which to speak. I want to collapse the border between centre and margin, or at least to make that border more permeable. I want to think about models of decolonized subjectivity that are inclusive, that could accommodate the experiences and desires of many different kinds of subjects,

including white settler subjects. Thus, I propose another kind of space, one that is neither a centre nor a margin but a space of adjacency and juxtaposition, an open space where diverse peoples interact and influence one another. But first, an analysis of models already available.

Borderland, Margin, Neighbourhood

Sidonie Smith writes of Anzaldúa's autobiographical text,

> Anzaldúa's manifesto progresses through the rhetorical focus on the geographical subject signalled in the title *Borderlands/La Frontera*. For Anzaldúa the topography of the borderland is simultaneously the suturing space of multiple oppressions and the potentially liberatory space through which to migrate toward a new subject position. The geographical trope is at once psychological, physical, metaphysical, spiritual, since it functions as a space where cultures conflict, contest, and reconstitute one another. ("Autobiographical Manifesto" 200)

This space--the borderland--is partly a physical space that represents the Texas, U.S. Southwest/Mexican border, a place that Anzaldúa knows personally and intimately as home. But it is also a cultural space of transgression. It is the space between seemingly "pure" subject positions: woman and man, heterosexual woman and lesbian, Mexican and American, Catholic and "pagan" religions, western and indigenous knowledges. The borderland is a third space that unsettles the apparent fixity and security of positions on either side of the line. But more than a troubling wedge, the borderland is a home to those who are "prohibited and forbidden . . . the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead" (Anzaldúa 3). The borderland is a place to live, a place of personal identification as well as of political action. In her autobiographical text, Anzaldúa positions the "I" that represents her as inhabiting this borderland space. But this is not simply a space where cultures meet and

mix, a safe haven where those who do not neatly fit the categories on either side of the border can belong; Anzaldúa imagines this space to actually *produce* a new subject position or "consciousness." She names this subject position "the new *mestiza*," and its characteristic feature is hybridity. It is a subject position that explodes the rigid dualities of western oppositional thinking and can account for the heterogeneous, unassimilable mixture of cultures, languages, ideologies, and forms that constitute a particular kind of subjectivity.

Interestingly, Robert Kroetsch has proposed a model of Canadian identity that is also based on the spatial metaphor of the border. Kroetsch is speaking about "Canadian Literature" writ large; however, his comments gesture towards a model of Canadian identity--or what he calls "the Canadian psyche" ("Reading Across" 339)--that is experienced both culturally and personally. It is by now a commonplace notion that national literatures partly constitute subjectivity: it is not just that readers recognize themselves in literary texts but that literary texts produce and constitute subject positions that readers internalize and take on as their own. "Canadian literature," writes Kroetsch, "is the autobiography of a culture that insists it will not tell its story. It is the autobiography of a culture that locates itself against the security of all direct arrivals at self-knowledge by elaborate stratagems of border, of periphery, of the distanced centre" ("Reading Across" 338). The border marks a difference--but also a relationship--between Canada and other places, primarily Europe and the United States. The border also marks the alterity that is at the heart of Canada itself, for Canada is internally fractured: it is a multicultural and multiethnic nation made up of people with many different points of origin and diverse histories, languages, allegiances, and desires. Kroetsch sees Canadian culture as a culture that constantly negotiates borders.

Borders are tricky places. They can be places of entry or places of prohibition. They can be imagined either as lines that separate or as lines that join. They can be thin lines, hardly noticeable at all, or they can be thick lines, marking out a liminal space that

is neither here nor there but is, in itself, somewhere. Kroetsch sees the border as a necessary divide that marks a peripheral space from which to think and write *outwards* from a centre that has been overdetermined by imperial authorities, whereas Anzaldúa imagines the borderland (the addition of "land" is an important difference here) as a habitable place that is wide and open. A borderland can be a home.

But the border and the borderland, I suggest, do not provide models of an emancipatory subjectivity that are entirely appropriate to second world locations such as Canada and Australia.[6] Yes, borders mark a relationship between sides, between categories, between cultures. And they represent a third space that is new and promising. But borders are still, I think, primarily sites of division. Borders keep certain people in and others out. Further, I can't imagine the borderland as a permanent or secure home. Borderlands are no-man's-lands, artificially created by political decrees, policed by bureaucrats and soldiers. They belong to no one in particular, and can, therefore, be occupied by those who are "illegitimate," those who Anzaldúa would call the "border crossers." And yet, for me, the borderland conjures up images of refugee camps. These spaces can and do become homes; they can be friendly, self-contained, workable communities held together by their occupants' shared experiences of having no place else to go. But who would want to live in such a place? It seems to me that the associations and meanings of the border and the borderland, at least at this contemporary moment (especially with whole new groups of refugees being created by the shifting of borders in the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe), are still too disturbing, too laden with human tragedy, to provide a positive model of emancipated, decolonized subjectivity. Perhaps most troubling is the fact that borderlands generally lack a history of occupation--although they often inscribe histories of violence. They are too dependent on the vagaries of shifts in national politics to be secure homes. They are hard to imagine as places in which to put down roots.

Of course, Anzaldúa knows that borderlands are not safe, comfortable spaces, but then for her, neither was either side of the line. In fact, she believes that it is the very ambiguity and precariousness of the space that permits the creation of a new, *mestiza* consciousness: "and though [the *mestiza* consciousness] is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" (80). Similarly, bell hooks knows that her spatial model of radical decolonized subjectivity--the margin--is not a particularly easy space to inhabit, but it is a productive space, nonetheless. hooks consciously *chooses* the margin as a "space of radical openness. . . a profound edge" (149) from which she has a double view of both inside (the centre, the dominant mainstream) and outside (the space of the marginalized other). The margin, is part of the whole, but outside the main body (149). The centre can be entered, temporarily, by those who are on the margins, but it cannot be occupied by them. The margin, on the other hand, is a home in itself. It is a space both of exclusion *and* of active resistance. From a position that is within this liminal third space, there exists the possibility of simultaneously interrogating the centre, unsettling and refusing its complacent authority, and creating alternative speaking positions. This in between space, this marginal space, has its own language, a language of ambivalence and contradiction that, like the language of Anzaldúa's borderland, refuses the hegemony of fixed, essentialized identities.

hooks explains that "[u]nderstanding marginality as position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people" (150). But I am left with a troubling, and, hopefully, provocative question: how does the non-oppressed subject find her place in relation to these models of radical subjectivity? I ask the question because surely the project of effecting genuine social emancipation is not the exclusive burden of the colonized. Surely the work must be shared, undertaken by *both* those with cultural power *and* those from whom power has been withheld. Surely in imagining a radical cultural politics of decolonization--and the new spaces and

subjectivities that are appropriate to it--we must search for models that would not be the exclusive provenance of the oppressed. Obviously, the colonized have the greatest need to reinvent non-oppressive subject positions, and people such as Anzaldúa and hooks have forged ahead with this difficult task. But what good are new subject positions if they do not allow those who are in the dominant group to also identify with them? Isn't it crucial that those in the dominant group find ways of unlearning their privilege and divesting themselves of power, that they find new strategies of self-identification? Isn't the task for all of us to find new ways of being in the world?

In terms of my own project, the question is this: how can Australian and Canadian subjectivities be formulated in such a way that points of intersection and interaction between heterogeneous subjects could be effected? How can we imagine subjectivities that would not automatically locate different people on either side of the paralyzing binary of colonizer/colonized? And perhaps most challenging of all is this question: how can those who currently occupy dominant subject positions be motivated to invest in the project of decolonization? In other words, which models of second world subjectivity would permit all subjects located in these nation spaces to decolonize their minds?

What I am reaching for here is a formulation of subjectivity based on a notion of the community, but *a particular kind of community*, one that is open and plastic and that would encourage diverse subjects to locate themselves within it. Iris Marion Young undertakes an important critique of the idea of community by underscoring some of the hidden assumptions that have come to be associated with community in social and political discourses. Basically, her critique focuses on the fact that community relies on and privileges unity and homogeneity over diversity and difference. In other words, community membership is generally based on sameness. Constructed in this way, communities easily become exclusionary, separatist enclaves with impenetrable borders. Further, argues Young, the idea of community tends to rely on a notion of subjectivity

that has been discredited by contemporary poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories. Community generally posits an "identity" that is transparent both to the subject him or herself and to others within the community: "The ideal of community presumes subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves" (302). Young argues that advocates of community as a social ideal tend to perpetuate what Derrida has called a "metaphysics of presence" where the subject is assumed to be coherent and stable. But it cannot account for a notion of subjectivity as internally split and fragmented (303-05). Moreover, community membership tends to require that the subject define him or herself in terms of a single identity--race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnicity, etc.--whereas subjectivity is much more complex than this. Nobody is just one thing. Indeed, it is impossible to prioritize the different personal factors that constitute subjectivities. And finally, models of community depict relations among members as taking place within small, decentralized, spaces where face-to-face contact is possible. Young argues that this is an unrealistic vision in that it cannot account for the lived experiences of people inhabiting large urban centres where members of groups are separated by time and distance, nor can it adequately account for the political relations among face-to-face communities themselves (312-17).

Perhaps the single most significant shortcoming of a generalized notion of community as a social ideal is that it fails to recognize the fact that most of us are living among people who are strangers to us and with whom we have, on the surface of it anyway, very little in common (Young 317). While inhabitants of a small Alberta town, for instance, may share a common racial and cultural background and, thus, feel a sense of community among themselves, that community is disrupted when Native peoples who live on reserve land only a few miles away come into town, or when a black family or gay couple moves into the house next door. In Canada, even though it is an officially multicultural nation, and even though our cities are ethnically diverse metropolitan centres, individual groups tend to live as ghettoized, insular communities, isolated from

the mainstream which continues to be defined in terms of white, middle-class, Christian, heterosexual subjectivity. What we need to be able to do is to reformulate the mainstream so that it becomes more inclusive and more integrated.

Young proposes a model of radical subjectivity based on the ideal of the unoppressive city where "city" is defined *not* in terms of size but "as a *kind of relationship* of people to one another, to their own history, and one another's history" (318, emphasis in the original). This model has much to recommend it, and my own thinking follows closely along the line of Young's; nevertheless, I differ from Young in two respects. First, Young posits an ideal metropolitan subjectivity, based on the unoppressive city, that does not really recognize any points of overlap or similarity between subjects--"[People] are externally related, they experience each other as other, different, from different groups, histories, professions, cultures, which they do not understand" (318). Second, Young's sense that city dwellers benefit from each others' differences--she notes that people enjoy eating in ethnic restaurants, for instance--tends to exoticize difference and to focus on the entertainment value of cultural diversity in large urban centres. My concern is to articulate a model of unoppressive, decolonized subjectivity based on a spatial model that would foster interaction and communication between diverse subjects. And although Young critiques face-to-face contact, I feel that such contact is *essential* to communicating across cultural differences. My model of subjectivity, then, is somewhat smaller and more localized than Young's. I propose that Canadian and Australian subjectivities might be formulated in terms of a model based on the multicultural neighbourhood.[7]

Neighbourhoods cohere around a single common denominator: spatial proximity. People are connected through juxtaposition and adjacency. But spatial proximity is the *only* common experience that is assumed; thus, this model avoids the mistake of assuming that people "share subjectivity" (Young 309) or can transparently understand one another. People who inhabit the same neighbourhood, however, *might*

find areas of experience or concern in common. Neighbourhoods at least provide the *opportunity* for different people to meet each other and to engage in personal exchanges. Within a neighbourhood, the obvious walls that separate and divide people might, at certain times and under certain circumstances, become more permeable.

Importantly, neighbourhoods have recognizable, traceable histories. They are not fixed, as communities based on race, sexuality, class, gender, or ethnicity tend to be; rather, the demographics and physical features of neighbourhoods change over time. Neighbourhoods inscribe social memory; the past is ever visible in both the physical structures that are characteristic of the neighbourhood and in the memories and stories of their inhabitants. Buildings might be torn down and new ones built, or existing buildings might gain new functions, but the record of the past survives, whether in oral narratives, archival documents, or physical artifacts. Further, neighbourhoods record diverse histories because occupants inscribe their own distinctive histories in and relationships to neighbourhoods. There is nothing natural about neighbourhoods; they are constructs that can and do change over time.

Neighbourhoods can feel like home because their physical features and spatial arrangements are human-sized and generally comforting rather than dispersed and alienating. A neighbourhood is a manageable space, a habitus, a place within which the subject can feel contained. It incorporates both public spaces, where face-to-face contact with others is fostered, and private spaces, where the individual can retreat into his or her own individual and idiosyncratic life. Thus, neighbourhood occupancy does not require that individuals repress their complex subjectivities in favour of some singular notion of identity. Further, inhabitants have a personal stake in keeping their neighbourhood safe and attractive. Feeling part of a neighbourhood encourages individuals to invest themselves in local politics and community-based activities. In fact, neighbourhoods work best when they incorporate and draw on a range of personalities, talents, skills, and visions. They can accommodate people of many

backgrounds, including white, European, middle-class, Christian heterosexuals, but this group need not necessarily dominate. Indeed, this group must not be allowed to "gentrify" the buildings or "white out" its culturally-diverse occupants. Such "social renewal" projects, which do not usually "renew" anything but reinforce, instead, the status quo, must be constantly guarded against.

Neighbourhoods work if all inhabitants think of themselves as part of an unassimilated collective that hangs together through mediation and negotiation of differences. Neighbourhoods are not based on a shared history, politics, or point of identification, but are shifting, permeable, loosely-arranged ensembles of different people who have a common interest in keeping that habitus free of violence, degradation, and discrimination. Most of us inhabit several neighbourhoods over the course of our lives, and the fact that it takes awhile before we begin to feel at home in a particular neighbourhood is a useful reminder of how much work is involved in creating a sense of belonging. The more we become involved in our neighbourhoods, however--which at its most basic level means entering into relations with others who live or work there--the more at home we will feel.

To summarize the positive aspects of an identity politics based on the concept of the neighbourhood, then: first, this model of subjectivity recognizes historical contingency. To live in a neighbourhood is to become part of the history and rhetoric of a particular place. Second, neighbourhoods do not rely on essentialized notions of identity; all kinds of different people live in them. Third, subjectivity based on the idea of the neighbourhood recognizes that there is nothing automatic or natural about belonging. To become part of a neighbourhood takes a certain willingness to negotiate among inhabitants, for it cannot be assumed that everyone shares common needs or desires. Fourth, a formulation of the subject as neighbour is a concept that is portable. Once a subject learns how to participate in the process of making a neighbourhood into a home, the process can be repeated elsewhere. It becomes a life skill. Fifth, unlike

either Anzaldúa's borderland or hooks's margin, the neighbourhood is a space within which those in the dominant group can find a place and can become part of the project of social emancipation. And finally, such a model requires the subject to take responsibility for his or her attitudes and behaviours. To be part of a group or community, such as a racial group, may be an accident of birth, but to be part of a neighbourhood requires sustained, responsible involvement. Subjects have to invest themselves in neighbourhoods. May Yee, a Chinese Canadian, writes "we must live in the homes of our own making" (15); perhaps the important point here is that *homes do not just happen but must be made.*

A model of subjectivity based on the idea of the multicultural neighbourhood is not, of course, without its problems. As neighbourhoods are now commonly constituted they are frequently homogeneous and exclusionary, especially in terms of class. What kind of living space is available in a particular neighbourhood, its style, amenities, state of repair, location, and cost are all related to the social position of its inhabitants. How much space each individual is afforded--how close one is to one's immediate neighbours --is also class specific. Moreover, some people cannot afford to pay for accommodation in any neighbourhood but live on the streets and so have neither the same access to the resources of the neighbourhood nor the same degree of investment in maintaining it as a comfortable space. Moreover, we must remember that women, children, and the aged, all have relatively lower mobility and freedom within any neighbourhood space, for neighbourhoods are not free of violence. And of course, the kind of racial and cultural mixing I envision is not so easily achieved. Yet it is important, I think, to posit such models as ideals even if they are not fully realizable--or at least not yet--for only by creating such models can these ideals enter into social consciousness.

If subjectivity can be imagined in terms of a spatial model of the neighbourhood, then, the possibility exists for individuals to engage with and insert themselves into the model. Indeed, in Canada and Australia, where large immigrant populations shape the

face of social spaces, many multicultural neighbourhoods already exist. For the most part these have proven to be more or less workable in large urban centres--Toronto, Montreal, Sydney. Those of us who have experienced the excitement, challenge, and reward of living in an ethnically- and racially diverse-place know that it can, and does, work. But it takes commitment and effort to learn to respect differences among people and how to negotiate manageable and equitable relations. Nothing can be taken for granted. Belonging takes work.

This kind of neighbourhood is not acceptable. An article in The Globe and Mail reports that a particular West Vancouver neighbourhood is undergoing a painful transition. Called "British Properties," this neighbourhood had originally been conceived of as "a refuge for people of considerable means and it tried to give them a guarantee that they would always be among others just like them" (Matas A1). The article is about the fact that increasing numbers of Asians and Iranians are moving in and changing the look of the place--in more ways than one. Originally there had been a restriction written into the buyer's contract that "no person of Asiatic or African race or of African or Asiatic descent (except servants of the occupier of the premises in residence) shall reside or be allowed to remain on the premises" (Matas A6). The restriction was amended thirty years ago by a notation that stated that it no longer applies; but the words remain on the books. The article goes on to report that people in the neighbourhood feel isolated from each other. Some blame the huge "monster" houses new residents are building for obstructing visual access to one's neighbours. Others blame the fact that community events and spaces--the golf club, the fitness club, the Anglican church--are exclusionary. But the problem, of course, is cultural difference and the inability or unwillingness of some Canadians to attempt to get to know others who are different from themselves. As the reporter suggests at the end of the article, children seem to make friends because they meet every day at school; if their

parents would only talk to each other too, then they might find that they have more in common than they think. Neighbourhoods are places of meeting and negotiation. But inhabitants must be willing to enter into face-to-face contact with each other. They must talk.

Neither Sally Morgan nor Lee Maracle writes her autobiography with the explicit intention of formulating subjectivities based on new spatial models. Neither would necessarily recognize her scripted, autobiographical subjectivity in terms of what I have described as the multicultural neighbourhood. And yet both autobiographies stand as models of nascent subjectivities that are based on an ethics of overlap, adjacency, historical contingency, sharing, and mutually-beneficial cooperation between people of different cultural backgrounds, an ethics that is crucial to a politics of decolonization. Importantly, both autobiographers claim the whole of their respective countries as their own places, and their autobiographical projects are specifically concerned with how to negotiate a sense of belonging there. But they do not posit subjectivity in terms of a single regional or racial identification; rather these texts open up ways in which all Australians and Canadians can reinvent themselves as good neighbours to each other.

Aboriginality in the Australian Suburbs: Sally Morgan's *My Place*

> But I am not an island. I live the lives of other people.
>
> Lolo Houbein
> *Wrong Face in the Mirror: An Autobiography of Race and Identity* (256)

The founding moment of Sally Morgan's autobiography is the challenge she faces from her schoolmates:

> The kids at school had also begun asking us what country we came from. This puzzled me because, up until then, I'd thought we were the same as them. If we insisted that we came from Australia, they'd reply "Yeah, but what about ya parents, bet they didn't come from Australia." (38)

The issues of origin and belonging, of blood and culture, that are contained in this question motivate the narrator's attempt to discover and come to terms with her racial inheritance. But these are also issues that go right to the heart of constructions of subjectivity based on place. What *is* the place of the autobiographical "I"? Where did she come from? Where is she now? If the kids at school don't think of her as belonging, why not? Sally has already noticed that by looking at the food her classmates bring for their lunches she could tell which part of the city they came from, and she knows that she and her siblings "came from the rough-and-tumble part, where there were teenage gangs called Bodgies and Widgies, and where hardly anyone looked after their garden" (37). But she has not yet realized the full implications of being considered out of place in her own country. The autobiography charts Morgan's efforts to claim a place for herself within Australia, and it rethinks what belonging within the social space of contemporary Australia means.

My Place is an important book not least because it has reached a huge number of readers both within Australia and abroad. It is a popular best seller, and it is regularly taught in Australian schools and universities. More scholarly essays have been written and published about this text than perhaps any other text by an Aboriginal author. The publication of a study guide, entitled *Whose Place?* (Bird and Haskell), for use in classroom settings, further secures the position of *My Place* within the canon of Australian literature, as well as signalling the importance of the question of the relationship between subjectivity and place raised by the text. The text "challenges and extends European Australian consciousness of what it is to have an Aboriginal family heritage" (Thomas 761),[8] and it encourages readers to be aware of how "Australianness"

has been conventionally defined, thus opening up the possibility of how it might be redefined.

Writing by Aboriginal peoples does not usually win such widespread mainstream acceptance, and it is important to reflect on why this book has been so successful. First, certain social conditions helped to promote it, most especially the timing of its publication. *My Place* challenged the official record of Australian national identity--told the untold story, as it were--at the precise moment when a large-scale and very public challenge was about to be launched in response to the Bicentenary celebrations in 1988.[9] Thousands of Australians--black and white--took to the streets to protest a national celebration of European conquest and the dispossession and colonization of Aboriginal peoples that resulted, and although *My Place* was published a year before the Bicentennial, it is clear that the indictment of white society enacted by the text tapped into a receptive chord in Australian society, as several critics have noted (Longley, "Autobiographical Storytelling" 377, Thomas 755, Mulvaney 92). There can be little doubt too that the sensational aspects of this text helped to popularize it. Part of the fascination of the text is the very fact that the text exposes a *known* family, the Drake-Brockmans, and it documents their racist attitudes towards and exploitation of Morgan's relations, as well as the troubling fact that Howden Drake-Brockman is probably the father of both Morgan's grandmother, Daisy, and her mother, Gladys (Brett 10, Sheridan 20). Other critics have suggested that *My Place* has reached such a wide audience primarily because it is "not obviously Aboriginal in its presentation" (Longley, "Autobiographical Storytelling" 376), mainly because the language conforms to Standard English and does not inscribe an Aboriginal English that is characteristic of some other Aboriginal life narratives but less comfortable and familiar to white readers. Perhaps most significantly, the autobiography has been deemed desirable by both the mainstream public and academic institutions because it presents a version of Aboriginality that is generally acceptable to the dominant culture. *My Place* focuses on

the discovery of Aboriginality through a process of personal identification (rather than in terms of quantity of blood, physical features, lifestyle, etc.), which is what the discourse of Australian multiculturalism has promoted as the appropriate way of thinking about racial and ethnic difference (Whitlock, E-mail).

My Place has not been without its critics. The influential Aboriginal writer and critic Mudrooroo argues, in *Writing From the Fringe,* that Morgan's text is not authentically Aboriginal in that its focus is on the quest for individual identity and the attempt to find accommodation within a multicultural Australia (14). Mudrooroo criticizes *My Place* for not being sufficiently oriented towards the *Aboriginal* community, indeed, for suggesting that "it is considered O.K. to be Aboriginal as long as you are young, gifted, and not very black" (149). Eric Michaels considers the ways in which *My Place* negotiates the slippery generic line between ethnography and autobiography and worries about the text's privileging of insider knowledge, which, he argues, promotes an ideology of authentic and transparent personal identity. Michaels suggests that Aboriginal ideas of personhood might be different from western ones, and he wonders "whether the conventions of modern European autobiography are an appropriate way to package these stories, or whether they finally do violence to the very subjects they seek to describe" (50). Eleanor Hogan argues that *My Place* traces Aboriginal identity through constructing a maternal genealogy, but she worries that other elements of the text, most notably the white masculine discourse of the "bush hero" evoked by Arthur's narrative and the valuing of Christian beliefs by all the members of the family, ultimately undermine the inscription of an Aboriginal identity. Hogan argues that "[Morgan's] use of white cultural frames suggests the impossibility of her family 'discovering' an Aboriginal identity outside the discourses of the colonising culture" (19).

My Place is heralded or criticized in terms of its status as an Aboriginal text, yet it challenges and troubles the category "Aboriginal." This text demonstrates what Trinh

T. Minh-ha has described as the "leakiness" of subjective categories that are constructed according to notions of authenticity, especially as authenticity is defined in terms of racial or cultural difference (94). This is the autobiography of a hybrid subject, a category-crosser. The narrator is a woman of mixed blood; a woman who didn't know until she was an adult that she is part Aboriginal; a woman who is largely alienated from traditional Aboriginal culture; a woman who has been educated in white, western academic institutions; a woman whose lived environment is urban, even suburban; a woman who lacks the very thing that would guarantee her authenticity as an Aboriginal Australian--a spiritual and cultural tie to the land. Simply put, the narrator's claim to an Aboriginal identity is uncertain. Indeed, when her right to hold a university scholarship for Aboriginal students is questioned, she challenges that claim herself:

> Had I been dishonest with myself? What did it really mean to be Aboriginal? I'd never lived off the land and been a hunter and a gatherer. I'd never participated in corroborees or heard stories of the Dreamtime. I'd lived all my life in suburbia and told everyone I was Indian. I hardly knew any Aboriginal people. What did it mean for someone like me? (141)

The very undecidability of the narrator's subject position, however, is what is so interesting and important, for this autobiography demonstrates that subjectivity is not just about what we *have* but about what we *make*. In this sense, then, subjectivity can be conceived of not only as a set of predetermined attributes or ideological compulsions but as a process. Chris Prentice argues that "[s]ubjectivity is both the *place* within the Symbolic, and the *process* of coming into being, which could be termed *placelessness*" (66). Noting that "placelessness is one of the principle conditions of Aboriginal oppression" (74), Prentice reads Morgan's autobiography as an attempt to "retrieve a sense of place in order to restore the productive dialectic of identity as process" (74). It

initiates "the productive interplay of place and placelessness" (79-80) that constitutes a contemporary postcolonial identity that is specifically Aboriginal *and* Australian.

In order to answer the question of what Aboriginality means for someone like her, the narrator travels. While that journey is partly a geographic one, it is also a journey through history. The geographic journey takes the narrator and her family up North to the Pilbara Region and to the station, Corunna Downs, where her grandmother and her uncle Arthur were born. The trip North serves at least two purposes: first it puts the narrator in a place where she can do research into her family background by talking to people who knew her grandmother Nan and her uncle Arthur; second it reconnects the narrator with both a place and a family she didn't know she had. Indeed her trip North constitutes an occasion for the narrator and her many relations to mutually claim one another. Almost everyone she meets is, in some way related to her, whether by blood, tribe, skin group, or "mob," and these people are as pleased to discover her as she is to discover them. The settlement of white colonists had meant the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and the dispersal of families and tribal communities. Children fathered by station owners were forcibly removed from their Aboriginal mothers and sent to mission schools, orphanages, or white foster families as part of an official government policy to assimilate half-castes. For the narrator and her mother to go back to Corunna Downs, then, is an enormously important symbolic voyage. Even though it is not their territory in terms of traditional concepts of tribal land, Corunna Downs is the scene where strong family ties were severed. To revisit that scene means to begin to reconstitute what white settler Australian society had torn apart. As the narrator puts it, "we had a sense of place now" (230). The reconstitution of family and community is important for those who remained too. One exchange between the narrator and some old people she meets speaks to the wider importance of the return journey. Sally explains who she is and that her grandmother had been taken from Corunna Downs. One old man answers:

> "That's right," he agreed, "hundreds of kids gone from here. Most never come back. We think maybe some of them don't want to come home. Some of those light ones, they don't want to own us dark ones."
>
> "I saw picture about you lot on TV," chipped in another. "It was real sad. People like you, wanderin' around, not knowin' where you come from. Light coloured ones wanderin' around, not knowin' they black underneath. Good on you for comin' back, I wish you the best." (222)

Because of the extreme racial prejudice directed against darker-skinned Aboriginal peoples, a prejudice sometimes internalized by its victims, it is significant for everyone that the narrator would wish to identify with her black relations. Going to Corunna Downs means that the narrator, perhaps for the first time, consciously identifies herself as black.

Going back, however, is *not* about going home in the sense that the journey initiates the narrator's retrieval of an ancestral geographical territory or culture; rather, going back, is about finding ways of belonging in the place she inhabits right here and now. The narrator must bring what she learns by going to the Pilbara back home to the suburbs of Perth. Personal, spiritual, and political connections to the land are obviously important issues for Aboriginal peoples, and for some dispossessed Aboriginals in Australia, one way of identifying with their racial and cultural heritage is to reclaim their ancestral territories. But in *My Place*, there is a tension around the idea of land and the narrator's relation to it. One of the most powerful stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples is that they all have a special relationship with the land and the living creatures that inhabit it. Indeed, the narrator acknowledges that this is one of the *only* things she knows about Aboriginals. She attempts to claim those stereotypes as potential sites of a positive identification, but her sister calls down such easy formulations:

> "Accept it? Can you tell me one good thing about being an Abo?"

> "Well, I don't know much about them," I answered. "They like animals, don't they? We like animals."
>
> "A lot of people like animals, Sally. Haven't you heard of the RSPCA?"
>
> "Of course I have! But don't Abos feel close to the earth and all that stuff?"
>
> "God, I don't know. All I know is none of my friends like them." (98)

The fact that both the narrator and Jill use the pejorative Anglo-Australian term "Abos" and speak about "them" as distinct from "us" marks the distance between these particular young women and the stereotypical representations of Aboriginal peoples that are available to them. In some ways, the swamp behind the Milroy's house and the bush that surrounds the school provide an important--if unconscious--connection between the narrator and ancestral Aboriginal beliefs and practices associated with the land. The narrator remembers lessons Nan taught her about the land and wildlife, and she says things such as "[t]he swamp behind our place had become an important place for me. It was now part of me, part of what I was as a person" (59). To interpret these moments in the text as irruptions of the narrator's hidden or repressed authenticity, however, would be a mistake. Formulations of Aboriginal subjectivity based on land are simply not readily available to the narrator. This autobiography does not posit Aboriginality based on the retrieval of a "lost" place or tradition; rather it opens up definitions of Australian Aboriginal subjectivity to include the experiences and realities of middle-class, urban, educated, light-skinned, mono-lingual, secularized peoples.

The trip to the Pilbara is important, but this text suggests that it is necessary to understand that *all* of Australia, including the cities and the suburbs, is home to Aboriginal peoples. An Aboriginal presence in Australia--Australia conceived of as the natural *and* the built environment, the spiritual *and* the discursive orders--can be asserted positively, but that presence must necessarily incorporate aspects of both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultures, as well as non-Aboriginal cultures.

My Place, as Prentice argues, enacts both "physical and discursive returns to the land" (78)' however, it does not do so in order to reach a point of arrival in terms of purity of either place (tribal land) or identity (authentic Aboriginality). Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra emphasize the fluidity of Aboriginal cultural production, arguing that it is situated on a "transformational continuum, between what seem more and less traditional positions" (91). They note that *My Place* functions as a kind of map that traces out routes that are influenced by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural forms:

> This map no longer claims exclusive right for Aborigines over Australia in spite of the paranoiac claims of anti-land rights propagandists. On the contrary it uses maps of physical space as the controlling metaphor in a semiotic system whose aim is to find and assure a place in Australia for Aboriginal people: a place that recognises older rights to specific parts of the country, and newer rights to live and work and find a meaningful identity in contemporary Australian society. (101)

The concept of place, in Morgan's autobiography, then, is much more than a particular site or region--although it includes that meaning. Simply put, place is a structure of belonging.[10] When the narrator returns to Corunna Downs, she, indeed, reclaims a place that is partly hers, but, more importantly, she claims the right to forge a subject position appropriate to a contemporary Australian woman of mixed race.

Ultimately, what Sally Morgan constructs is not a reclaimed but a newly-imagined subjectivity, one that can account for the complex network of diverse knowledges, histories, and cultures that constitute the autobiographical "I." As Longley, points out, this new model of identity is important not only for Morgan but also for others: "[*My Place*] provides a crucial positive model for other projects that seek reinstatement and redefinition for subjugated cultures from positions and moments in history when almost all appears to have been lost" ("Autobiographical Storytelling" 377). I would risk going further. This text, it seems to me, presents an important new

model of subjectivity not only for those who belong to subjugated cultures but also for those who have been complicit in the processes of subjugation. In other words, this model is potentially available to a range of different Australian subjects.

My Place challenges the conventions of an imported European genre and exposes the ways in which narratives and genres shape and even produce subjectivity. *My Place* takes a generic form that has traditionally focused on the individual--even the exceptional individual--and opens it up to incorporate the life stories of others. By doing so, this autobiographical text demonstrates that subjectivity is never simply a matter of the specific personal attributes that we inherit at birth, or even the ways in which those personal attributes intersect or conflict with coercive social discourses. Instead, this autobiography suggests that subjectivity is *also* an effect of our connections with others. By including the life narratives of Arthur, Gladys, and Nan in her own autobiography, Sally Morgan reinvents the genre. *My Place* is not just an anomalous hybrid text that mixes generic forms--autobiography, biography, ethnography, fiction--rather, it offers a blueprint for how subjectivity might be understood as fundamentally relational. My point here is that the life narratives of others partly *constitute* the autobiographical subject. Tamsin Donaldson correctly points out that the narrator's own life narrative retains a different status from those of the others (351), and the narrative "I" that represents Sally Morgan remains the primary focus of the text. The title also emphasizes the "my" in *My Place* (it is not called "Our Place") and Morgan is the sole author and copyright holder of the text. The incorporation of other life narratives in the autobiography, therefore, must be understood as somehow intersecting with and shaping the autobiographical "I."

Important arguments have been made that it is characteristic of women that they define their subjectivities in terms of their relationships with others, especially those closest to them. Mary G. Mason's theory of female subjectivity is foundational in this respect. Mason argues that women conventionally construct themselves in relation to a

"chosen other" (210) whether that "other" be God, a husband, a parent, or a child. Susan Stanford Friedman extends Mason's argument and suggests that both women and minority peoples construct their subjectivities in terms of "*identification*, *interdependence*, and *community*" (38, emphasis in the original), not in terms of individuation and separation from others as is typical of western male autobiographies. While these theories have been very influential and have provided an important theoretical point of entry into women's autobiographical writings, they are firmly grounded in Anglo-American feminist and psychoanalytic theories (Friedman draws on the object relations theories of female developmental psychology advanced by Nancy Chodorow and Sheila Rowbotham, for instance), and their universal applicability must be challenged.[11] Similar textual strategies might function differently for different women. Subjectivity based on collectivity and the interdependence of "self" and community has also been posited as a description of the subjectivities of indigenous peoples, especially by critics such as Arnold Krupat and Doris Sommer. But again, motives and strategies might vary. In chapter one I discussed in some detail my hesitation to adopt any essentialized formulations of marginalized subjectivity--women's, aboriginals', or anyone else's. My interest is with how models or patterns of subjectivity might be opened up as sites where diverse peoples, not solely identified with a particular group, could potentially locate points of identification. An identity politics based on essentialized differences leads to and maintains separatism among groups. I am interested in discovering ways of thinking about subjectivity that are inclusive and malleable, not rigidly fixed. A model of subjectivity based on the connections and interdependencies among people--*diverse* people--who share spaces, both physical and social, might be one way of getting there.

The radical point is this: other people's personal narratives merge with, digress from, intersect with, inform, reposition, and reinvent our own. In other words, we are all in relationships with many others all the time. Just as subjectivity is never just one

thing (i.e. we are all more than our race, gender, class, sexual orientation etc.), so too subjectivity is not shaped in isolation. It is not that subjectivity is shared, meaning that one person is interchangeable with another, nor is it that another's subjectivity is so identical and transparent to us that it clarifies and secures our own. Rather, subjectivity is partly a function of the values, beliefs, desires, fears, and experiences of others.

My Place demonstrates that the subjectivities and histories of others implicate our own. In her search for her own genealogical history, the narrator must read her own life not only through the lives of those closest to her, but also through the stories that her relations up North provide, the versions of her family history that Alice and Judy Drake-Brockman tell her, and the official records she finds in the Battye Library. What the narrator learns, and what is apparent in the very structure of the text, is that there is no single narrative that would lead her to the truth of her identity. Indeed, although certain mysteries appear to be solved--for instance it becomes clear that Nan's father is Howden, not Maltese Sam as both Judy and Alice Drake-Brockman claim--others, most notably the fate of Nan's first child, remain obscure. The same territory of family history--the particulars of births, deaths, marriages, relationships, dwelling places--is repeatedly worked over and worked through, but there is no way to total up all of the information and produce a coherent story. Perhaps the hardest lesson the narrator must learn is that there will be things that she will *never* know. If Nan's story is an integral part of the narrator's own, then it is significant that there are things that Nan refuses to reveal, even to her granddaughter.

Arlene A. Elder finds in Nan's silence a connection between the written text of *My Place* and the oral storytelling tradition of Aboriginal culture (21-23). Indeed, Elder argues that this connection is what guarantees the authenticity of *My Place* as an Aboriginal text.[12] But just because two people are related by blood does not necessarily mean that they share all the contents of each other's knowledge. As the narrator learns, her assumption that if she just works on Nan long enough Nan will "crack" is a wrong-

headed assumption. Whether this reluctance to speak on Nan's part is in keeping with traditional Aboriginal laws concerning the dissemination of information or whether the past is just too shameful and emotionally-loaded to bring to the surface is unclear. But what is clear is that there are aspects of Nan's history that will never be known to the narrator. Nan's history--Nan's Aboriginality--is simply different from the narrator's. Nevertheless there is a meaningful relationship between Nan's life story and the narrator's; indeed Nan's subject position as an Aboriginal woman with a certain relationship to both Aboriginal and western cultures partly shapes her own. What the narrator learns from her family members changes forever how she thinks of, identifies, and represents herself.

Of course in *My Place* the focus is on the narrator's identification with her previously unknown Aboriginal ancestry; thus, the narratives of her mother's family are foregrounded. My working theory--that subjectivity is partly a function of those with whom we are in relationships--would be a lot tidier and probably more convincing if the text incorporated the life narratives of her white relations too.[13] Alice and Judy Drake-Brockman do tell bits of their stories, but these are severely truncated narratives, filtered through and interpreted by the narrator, that are generally shown to be distortions of the "truth." The obvious candidate to represent the narrator's white Australian heritage would be her father, but Bill Milroy does not offer his life narrative to his daughter. The autobiography opens with the narrator visiting her father in the veteran's hospital, and the fact that she speaks first about her father perhaps indicates his importance to her. But because he has been psychologically and emotionally broken by his experience of war, her father remains unavailable to her. He is an alcoholic, at times abusive, at times racist. Gladys provides some details about her husband in her narrative, but Bill utters not a word about himself. The narrator barely knows her father; thus, she does not have the opportunity of ever fully understanding either his life history from his own perspective or how his personal experience is informed by the wider context of

Australia's involvement in the war. Nor does she really know how her father's history helped to shape her own, except in terms of the danger he represented to the family. Of course her father is dead by the time Morgan embarks upon her autobiographical project, but I think it is safe to assume that his story would always have been largely unspoken and his subjectivity would have remained a meaningful absence in the text. Perhaps all that can be said about the father's absence is that this too marks the limits of the narrator's knowledge, including self-knowledge. And it signifies not only that investigating and taking stock of *all* aspects of our inheritances are important, including those that seem most unrecoverable, but also that the process of self-investigation must be undertaken again and again, from many different points in time and space.

My Place demonstrates that subjectivity is never something that an individual *has* or *owns* exclusively. Morgan's autobiography argues for the necessity of considering other people--no matter how difficult and limited this proves to be--in our self-representations. It does this, I think, not so much as a way of validating an "authentic" Aboriginal identity based on collectivity but in order to demonstrate the fact that subjectivity is partly a function of complex interpersonal relationships. Morgan limits her investigation to learning about her close relatives. Perhaps we can understand this as the first step towards understanding subjectivity in terms of juxtaposition, adjacency, and interconnectedness. Certainly the implication of the text is that subjectivity is not the exclusive terrain of an isolated individual. We are all the products of complex, overlapping histories. As the next autobiography I will discuss suggests, uncovering those histories is an ongoing process of personal review and critique. If each of us undertook this task, if we each investigated our own histories and inheritances, especially as they relate to those of others, then we will perhaps move one step closer towards decolonizing our relationships with others and fostering social renewal. Indeed, in multicultural and multiracial countries such as Canada and Australia, where the demands for power and respect are increasingly voiced both by

aboriginal peoples and by people of colour, self-investigation as a first step towards truly formulating decolonized subject positions might be considered urgent.

Cleaning Canadian Houses: Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*

In 1990, the same year in which Canadians witnessed the armed standoff between the Mohawks of the Kanehsatake Reserve and the Canadian Armed Forces at Oka, Quebec, Lee Maracle's autobiography, *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel,* was republished. The new edition opens with an essay by Maracle written behind the Mohawk barricades at Oka. This essay immediately positions the autobiography within the context of Canadian colonialism and the bitter struggles over land that have characterized the history of Native/non-Native relations in Canada and have become the focus of Native political resistance. In this sense, then, the text foregrounds the issue of place--who owns it, who belongs in it, and under what terms and conditions. This essay also immediately reminds white settler readers that Canada is not theirs by right of inheritance but has been violently seized from Native peoples. Thus, not only the contents of our inheritances as non-Native Canadians--both material and cultural--but also the conditions under which they were secured are immediately under scrutiny.[14] But, like Sally Morgan, Lee Maracle does not raise the issue of the historical legacy of white settlement in order to demand the immediate return of Native land and the expulsion of white settlers from Canada. Rather, Maracle argues that the colonial conditions in Canada that "annoy the mind"--a phrase that repeats throughout the essay as a powerful refrain--must be brought to an end, and that both Native and non-Native Canadians must do the necessary social work that would facilitate that end.

Like Morgan, Maracle's autobiographical project involves undergoing a process of personal review not only in order to understand how colonialism has situated her as its subject but also how she can move forwards and claim a place for herself within contemporary Canadian society. She reaches for a new subjectivity that both recognizes

and affirms her aboriginality and secures for her a positive social position as a Canadian. For Maracle, the project of subject formation is an ongoing one, and the autobiography dramatizes the fact that the formulation of a decolonized subject position is work that must be undertaken from many different points in time and space. This, I think, is what makes this autobiography a model that others--both Native and non-Native Canadians--can learn from and possibly adopt. If we think of subjectivity in terms of the idea of the multicultural neighbourhood, then *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* emphasizes the need to constantly review our own histories, to critique the sources of our knowledges, and to negotiate and renegotiate our relationships with the others with whom we live in close proximity. Maracle's autobiography is a composite text that does not, as Morgan's does, incorporate the life narratives of others but that situates the narrator's own life story within multiple contexts. And the model of subjectivity it proposes is dynamic and fluid.

In 1975, at the age of twenty-five, Lee Maracle dictated her life story into a tape recorder as part of a class project on life writing. Her friend and associate Don Barnett, a man whom she knew through her involvement with the Liberation Support Movement, a fellow Marxist, a white man, transcribed her words and reduced and edited the 80 hours of tape and three inches of manuscript ("Interview" 169-70). The text was published by the American Liberation Support Movement Centre as part of a series of "Life Histories from the Revolution" (Petrone 117). This book reached a limited audience, and, like much Native literature, it quickly went out of print. It was republished by the Women's Press in 1990. This new edition reprints the original 1975 text in its entirety, but it also includes additional textual material, including a foreword by the Okanagan writer Jeannette Armstrong and Maracle's own new opening essay, dedication, prologue, and epilogue, which frame and contextualize the original life story in new ways.

The 1990 edition of *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* incorporates words that could not be spoken in the original life narrative. Partly this is because the narrator's voice was constrained and shaped by the specific autobiographic contract that determined the text's production. The 1975 *Bobbi Lee* belongs in the category of "as-told-to" Native autobiographies. It is a commissioned text, brought into being more by the demands of Don Barnett (who occupies the role of white ethnographer) and the life histories class (which functions as the ethnographic occasion) than by Maracle herself. Arnold Krupat has characterized such an autobiography as a "bicultural composite composition" (*For Those* 31), a life narrative that is shaped by (at least) two voices, two histories, two agendas, two ideologies. As was typical at that time, the specific role of the amanuensis and editor in the text is obscured.[15] Although Barnett's voice is superficially absent, it is, in fact, the dominant voice in the text. In the prologue to the Women's Press edition, Maracle states that Barnett's intentions in initiating the collaboration were good--"Don never intended it to be a disaster for me" (19)--but the implication is, that in some respects at least, it was a disaster: "We had disagreements over what to include and what to exclude, disagreements over wording, voice. In the end, the voice that reached the paper was Don's, the information alone was mine" (19). But even the information was limited and distorted by the cultural difference between the amanuensis and the subject of the autobiography: "I didn't like white people. Period. I respected Don, at times almost liked him, but not quite. I didn't, couldn't tell him everything. There were too many obstacles in my path" (19). Maracle even claims that she hesitated to republish the original text, that she wanted to rewrite the whole thing, so unfamiliar does that representation of her "self" seem now.[16]

Subjectivity is not fixable through the production of a single autobiographical text. Maracle creates a representation of her subjectivity that is constituted through a series of readings and re-readings of her experience and the contents of her own knowledge. She narrates her life story in 1975 in the presence of Don Barnett and that

text becomes the original autobiography. Then she reads and narrates it *again* in the 1990 Women's Press edition, thus creating a meta-autobiography where the original autobiographic impulse and text are themselves re-read and re-interrogated.[17] Significantly, Maracle does not disown the original autobiography, just as she does not disown the "I" that represented her at that time. She chooses to republish the text unchanged, and, thus, remains true both to the readers for whom the original autobiography had meaning, and to that earlier interpretation and representation of her "self." Indeed, regardless of the struggles she and Don Barnett had over matters of voice, style, and content, the fact that she dedicates both versions of her autobiography to him indicates a profound respect for the person who helped her tell and own her life history in the first place. That original telling, no matter how mediated, was also an act of self-affirmation.

But it was not a mimetic, transparent rendering of her experience. On the contrary, even within the constraints of that particular "as-told-to" narrative act, the narrator is constantly reviewing and resituating her experience within the contexts of history and politics. In the original text, the narrator describes herself as someone who "was always trying to understand things" (33). While some sections of the narrative seem to present experience and event in a linear, realistic manner, other sections pause for reflection and interpretation. At certain moments, the narrative is self-reflexive and events are read through discourses of class, gender, and race analysis. In the first chapter, for instance, the narrator gives a fairly straightforward account of her home and family relations and the extreme poverty in which the family lived, but her political voice informs and contextualizes the description:

> We almost never bought anything. I never wore a regular pair of shoes till I was ten--only runners--and we never had any heat in the house. I also began wondering why most people--white people--didn't like Indians and treated us badly, like we weren't as good as they were. And soon I

> began to wonder if, or how, we could change the situation we found ourselves in. We seemed to be caught in the same rut all the time . . . always runnin' around in the same miserable rut. But I was still far too young and inexperienced to understand the social and class nature of our oppression. (32, ellipsis in the original)

Her language switches between declaration and interrogation, stating the way things were and then wondering how they got to be that way. This early autobiography, then, represents an important first attempt to understand her own personal experience in relation to broader social and cultural forces.

Knowledge--including self-knowledge--in this autobiography is not something that one accumulates but that one negotiates over time and space. There is no single perspective from which to secure and fix knowledge once and for all. Sometimes new knowledge, or, more accurately, a reevaluation of previously-held knowledge, is initiated by a physical move between places. For example, the narrator lives and works, for a time, with a Mexican American family in California. In her early years at school she had come into contact with racial prejudice directed against her, and she had thought of racism as being the exclusive provenance of whites: "their contempt and ostracism forced me to conclude that all whites were the same: creepy, cruel racists that I wanted nothing more to do with" (37). But in Visalia, she comes in contact not only with a more shocking "blatant racism" (53), where white people will not even speak to her, but also with the racism exhibited by Mexicans both towards whites and towards Native peoples, from whom the Mexicans distinguished themselves regardless of their actual racial origins. What the narrator learns is that racism is complex, insidious, and multi-targeted. Eventually she comes to explore and unlearn her own racial prejudice, which she had directed unilaterally against "whites," thinking of them as a homogeneous group, and to understand that aboriginal-white relations are more complex than these racial categories seem to allow. She learns that there are some white people (including

Don Barnett and his family, as the dedication and prologue indicate) with whom she can be friends.[18] She learns that the differences that seem to separate people are not necessarily absolute.

The new edition of *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* multiplies these moments of self-scrutiny and self-analysis. While the additional frame narratives provide a much-needed historical and political context within which to situate the narrator's life story, they also, especially in the epilogue section, fill in some of the details of her life since the publication of the original text. The 1975 text ends at the point where the narrator is in a troubled marriage and is pregnant with her third child. She is still involved in NARP (Native Alliance For Red Power), and she is reading books such as *Malcolm X Speaks*, Mao's *Military Writings*, and Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. although she remarks that at that time, she "couldn't relate Indian politics to the rather vague understanding I had about imperialism" (194). She describes herself in these terms: "I realized that in order to achieve that level [of political understanding] I'd have to drop my negative feelings about learning. Just doing some reading was an important step for me. Before, you know, I'd been anti-white, anti-politics, anti-intellectual, anti-Marx, anti-everything" (195). The original autobiography ends, then, at the moment where the narrator decides to commit herself to a continuing program of self-education in political thought and activity, a moment where the fact that knowledges can be both accumulated and either discarded or renegotiated becomes clear to her. This is also a moment when she realizes that negative critique *without* an accompanying vision of how social change might be brought about is ultimately unproductive.

At this point, the narrator's political consciousness is not specifically grounded in the Native community nor in any consciously-articulated understanding of what being Native in the contemporary Canadian social sphere means. Others around her are rediscovering aboriginal cultural beliefs and practices, but the narrator rejects these, saying that "traditionalism" made no sense to her at that time. Caught in an ideology of

individualism--a powerful colonizing legacy of white European culture--the narrator repudiates Native knowledges: "I generally put down the traditionalist position in a kind of offhand and arrogant way. I still tried to relate everything to my own personal experience, and if it didn't relate to me, or make sense in terms of my own experience, then I found it hard to grasp and rejected it" (197). In this denial of her own aboriginality is evidence of the success of one culture's attempt to erase another.

But this version, this interpretation of her life is an "ancient manuscript" (199), and the new edition brings a different "I" before the reader:

> I picked up *Bobbi Lee* and realized how unreliable a child's memory is. I was a child when this book first hit the press, at least in the sense I was not an adult. Somewhere along the line, I had been bent the wrong way as a child and I stayed bent in the wrong direction until the inability to walk woke me up. (200)

Although this second reading and review of her life story implies a narrative of progress and improvement, it actually reveals just how impossible getting a fix on one's own subjectivity is. The narrator is not a woman freed from oppression and released into the utopia of fully-arrived subjecthood; rather, she is a woman who must continuously undertake the work of understanding and "unbending" certain aspects of herself. This is the autobiography of a woman who has taken inventory of her subjectivity and learned something about herself and about the world that has shaped her, but she still struggles to overcome negative influences, negative habits of mind, and negative behaviours, to get out of what Jeannette Armstrong describes in her foreword to the new edition as "the somnambulistic fetal ball, survival state that psychological oppression had reduced our peoples to" (15).

No longer only an anti-white, anti-everything Native woman, in the frame narratives that now surround the original life story, the narrator represents herself as a complex human being with multiple roles and multiple subject positions. She is a wife,

now married to a man who loves and affirms her. She is a mother who thinks about the welfare and development of her children--which includes how she herself treats them and what she teaches them, especially though the example of her own attitudes as these are expressed in speech and behaviour--as much as she thinks about herself. She is a Native woman who has learned the value of paying attention to her own aboriginality, especially as it comes to her through the figure of T'a'ah, the grandmother, a figure whom she once rejected, or at least ignored. The hard shell of internalized colonialism, the "foreign code of conduct, its sensibility and its cold behaviour" (200) that has covered up the aboriginal inside of her, begins to crack. She reviews the "facts" and "truths" she learned at school and in books, and she thinks about the effect those "facts" and "truths" had on her sense of who she was. She brings her reading and her political analyses to her own experience, and she situates her own experiences in relation to those of other Native peoples. But she does not discard her "white" education. How could she? On the contrary, she integrates her diverse knowledges, always keeping in mind that what she knows might at some point require reevaluation.

Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel offers a model of what might be involved in fashioning decolonized Canadian subjectivity, but it also makes the point that the process cannot really begin until political issues, such as land claims, have been adequately settled. For Maracle, decolonization can only be achieved if all Canadians acknowledge and take responsibility for their part in the violent histories of genocide, theft, and oppression that have marked aboriginal-settler relations in this country. The standoff at Oka is graphic proof that there is still a long way to go. Unlike the original 1975 edition, *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* presents its readers with a challenge. That challenge is for all Canadians--no matter what their racial or ethnic origin--to name and resist the imperialist and racist ideologies that lie behind attitudes and behaviours. Individually and collectively, Canadians must each take inventory of, and take responsibility for, their particular histories. Or, as Maracle puts it, human connections between Natives and non-Natives

already exist, but "[w]hat I think is missing is the fundamental starting point of examining how we view the world and with what sorts of eyes we're looking at it" ("Coming" 74). Self-analysis, then, is one way to begin the process of decolonizing social relations among Canadians.

Maracle deploys a provocative spatial metaphor--the metaphor of the house--to explain what she means by owning one's own history. In an interview with Hartmut Lutz, Maracle speaks of the process of self-analysis that takes place during a Native spiritual ceremony as "work[ing] out the nature of your particular solidarity with creation" (172). Through this process, she says, one comes in contact with a personal and ancestral lineage that moves backwards through grandmothers and forwards through grandchildren. One comes to understand how relationships--with history, with other people, and with the environment--shape one's house by entering into it. European Canadians, says Maracle, are not attentive to either their "lineage memory" or creation (western society's seemingly willful destruction of the natural environment is evidence of the latter). By implication, European Canadians are not really aware of the design, the features, and the construction of their houses. If conditions in Canada are to improve, she asserts, all Canadians have to figure out how to get inside their own houses. Once inside, she implies, European Canadians have to investigate the condition of their houses, and, if they are not in good order, clean them up.

To evoke housecleaning as a metaphor for the process of self-review and self-critique is to point to the frustration and pain that are involved in producing autobiography. We all think that we know how to clean a house, that it is easy, straightforward work. It's hateful, and it's largely unrewarding, and the moment you think it's done you have to start again because something is still out of place or soiled. But it is necessary work if the business of life is to continue comfortably and healthfully. So it is with autobiography. It seems an easy thing to recount one's own life story, one's own experience, but the moment you think you've got part of yourself in

place, all nice and shiny, you notice a mark or a crack or some other kind of disorder. Like housework, the work of autobiography is exhausting, and sometimes painful, and it is a lot more difficult than it at first seems. But it is *necessary* work, for each of us has to understand how we have become who we are. Each of us has to enter our own ancestral house and study how it has been made. If, as I suggest, second world subjectivities can be imagined in terms of a multicultural neighbourhood, then it can only be for the greater benefit of the neighbourhood if all the individual houses are in good order. Each house touches and shapes others, for different subjects in these locations are, in profound ways, living in the same place.

"It is a complex thing this colonization" (238), says the narrator of *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*, and indeed it is, for colonialism affects both those who are oppressed and those who either actively perpetrate or passively comply with the oppression of others. Non-Native Canadians also have to decolonize their minds, for, as Maracle asserts, "[r]acism has de-humanized us all" (240). But non-Native Canadians have to do their own work, partly because, as Maracle comments in an interview with Janice Williamson, the dilemmas that we have been caught in are different ("'An infinite number'" 168). Partly non-Native Canadians have to find the *desire* to do the work within themselves; they have to *invest* in the project of decolonization:

> We, I, we, will take on the struggle for self-determination and in so doing, will lay the foundation, the brick that you can build on in undoing the mess we are all in. But so long as your own home needs cleaning, don't come to mine broom in hand. Don't wait for me to jump up, put my back to the plough, whenever racism shows itself. You need to get out there and object, all by yourself.
>
> We have worked hard enough for you. (241)

Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel represents Lee Maracle's struggle to get inside and explore her own house. What she learns, and what the additional frame material written around the

original text dramatizes, is that the task is huge and requires more than a single effort. This autobiography can be read as a postcolonial text because it emphasizes the fact that decolonization is a *process* of politically-vigilant personal review. A postcolonial subject position is not an *arrived* identity; rather, it is formulated through a series of back and forth movements over the ideological territory that the experience of colonialism in Canada has formed.

Importantly, I think, the new edition of *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* does not shut the non-Native reader out; on the contrary, it invites everyone in. It welcomes and encourages all Canadians to be part of the process of social renewal. *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* puts the onus on individuals to take responsibility for their own histories and their own minds, and it puts faith in the efficacy of small, local and personal changes that, through sheer accumulation, form a critical mass that must eventually put enough pressure on the systems and structures that distort and "bend" us all to alter them. Furthermore, it does not advocate a separatist politics. The narrator learns not to hate all whites as a matter of course, but, rather, to seek areas of co-operation and coalition. Second world locations such as Canada require such co-operation, for we must coexist in this land. The trick is to find ways to do so equitably and peacefully, to respect differences among our peoples and to create a society where all our houses are clean. *Bobbi Lee*, then, is a challenging book and a hopeful one. While it does not prematurely celebrate the liberation of Native peoples from colonial oppression, it does looks forward to the eventual demise of colonialism in Canada and the reconstruction of a new society. And it shows us one way in which we might all take active part in bringing this about.

Notes

[1] At the time of writing, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government has promised to abolish the Department of Indian Affairs as a first step towards granting Native peoples powers of self-government. In 1969, the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau made a similar suggestion. The infamous White Paper on Indian Policy was hotly contested by Native peoples on the grounds that its operative assumption was that Native peoples would then necessarily assimilate into mainstream Canadian society, i.e. disappear *as* Natives. In 1969 Jean Chrétien was Minister of Indian Affairs. One can only hope that he remembers the reasons why the White Paper was rejected, and that he realizes that the way to proceed is to *ask* Native peoples what would be best for them.

[2] Two successful land claims cases that are particularly important in terms of the impact they have had on Australian cultural perceptions of the immorality of settler appropriations of Aboriginal land are the returning of Uluru (Ayer's Rock) to the Pitjantjatjara people who reside there (see Tim Rowse's "Host and Guests at Uluru") and the case mounted by Eddie Mabo against the High Court of Australia for the return of Murray Island (see Rowse's "Mabo and Moral Anxiety").

[3] Goldie works *with* aboriginal materials, as is evidenced by his collaborative editorship of an anthology of Native Literatures with Daniel David Moses; however, as far as I know, he continues to refuse to write critically about Native texts.

[4] Of course, Rousseau's motives are not necessarily altruistic: it can be argued that his primary concern is that the sincere exposure of his own faults will ultimately win him the sympathy and admiration of others.

[5] Interestingly, Gillian Rose, who makes a strong argument for the reevaluation of geographical discourse and its supporting disciplinary structures in terms of feminism, finds in literary texts alternative ways of conceiving the relations between spaces and subjectivity. She describes female subjects as simultaneously defined by and

located outside of masculinist knowledge, and she suggests that this "paradoxical space" offers the potential for critique, resistance, and change. She bases this model on her readings of two autobiographical/critical texts, both of which I also discuss here, bell hooks's *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* and Minnie Bruce Pratt's "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart."

[6] For an insightful critique of the radical potential of Anzaldúa's text, see Annamarie Jagose's essay "Slash and Suture: Post/colonialism in 'Borderlands/La Frontera: *The New Mestiza'*."

[7] I deploy the term "multicultural" here simply to signal a plurality of cultural backgrounds. Both Canada and Australia are, demographically speaking, multicultural nations. Both also have official policies of multiculturalism--Canada's is enshrined in "The Canadian Multiculturalism Act" of 1971; Australia's is enshrined in the "National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia" formulated in 1989. In both countries, literary and cultural critics, as well as writers, have critiqued these official policies and exposed the gulf between official rhetoric and material practice. An exhaustive list of published works that address the issue would be too long to cite here, but these are some of the important texts in the debate: *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*, edited by Linda Hutcheon and Marion Richmond (a collection of short fiction and interviews by ethnic writers), *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations*, edited by Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O. Longley, Neil Bissoondath's "A Question of Belonging: Multiculturalism and Citizenship," M. Nourbese Philip's *Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture 1984-1992*, and some of the essays in the recent collection edited by Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman, *Feminism and the Politics of Difference* (see especially those by Gunew, Kamboureli, and Hatzimanolis).

[8] Susan Sheridan points out that part of the fascination of the text lies in the fact that it suggests that white readers might have "near or distant relatives, unknown to us, who have grown up as Aborigines" (20).

[9] For a reading of *My Place* as a counter-discursive text that subverts the dominant texts of Australian history, see Kathryn Trees.

[10] Interestingly, in an interview with Sally Morgan and her mother Gladys, it is Gladys who speaks of belonging in spiritual terms and connects this feeling specifically to the Pilbara region: "It's a funny feeling--I suppose it's like when people go into monasteries or to health farms to get renewed. Well I find that when I go up there, I get spiritually renewed. It's a belonging, and you just feel part of everything that's there" (Morgan, "Fundamental" 99). Of course Morgan has not lived in the region and would not necessarily identify with it in the same way as her mother, but it is significant that she does not claim the same kind of spiritual affiliation with the region. Morgan tends to think of the place as a source of information, a place that records a certain history to which she belongs only tangentially.

[11] See Sidonie Smith's essay "The [Female] Subject in Critical Venues," especially pages 114-20, for such a challenge.

[12] Within traditional Aboriginal cultures, stories are collectively owned, but both access to knowledge and the freedom to tell stories is tightly controlled (see Stephen Muecke 415).

[13] Eleanor Hogan argues that the suppression of male ancestry--and the white patriarchal social system it represents--is necessary in order to inscribe a specifically Aboriginal identity traced through the female line.

[14] The standoff at Oka is an event that affected all Canadians, but, as Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel argue, this, and other crises involving Native peoples that are captured by the media, are not always adequately understood in terms of the 500

years of colonialism in Canada (1-2). For their discussion of the political ramifications of Oka see pages 47-53. One of the great strengths of Alanis Obomsawin's film, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, is that it provides a much-needed historical and political context within which to situate the struggle over land. Gail Valaskakis considers the role of the media in shaping a Native identity based on the image of the Mohawk warrior and how such images impact both white and aboriginal communities.

[15] For an analysis of the role of the amanuensis in the shaping of Native women's life stories see Helen Carr. Anne E. Goldman's essay "Is That What She Said? The Politics of Collaborative Autobiography" is a fascinating discussion of some of the discursive strategies minority speakers use to resist the shaping and control of their life narratives by white editors.

[16]In an interview with Hartmut Lutz, Maracle reveals that some events didn't happen as they are presented in the original book and that the narrative was shaped by the editors to "make it all even throughout" ("Interview" 170).

[17] Maracle goes over much of the same material in her later text, *I Am Woman*, a book that can also be read as autobiography. In her novel *Sundogs*, she invents a character, Marianne, who undergoes a process of personal self-discovery and develops a political consciousness much like Maracle's own. One of the crucial events for Marianne in developing this political consciousness is her participation in the Peace Run organized as a demonstration of solidarity with the Mohawks at Oka.

[18] Maracle explores her own racism, this time directed towards Asians, in the personal essay "Yin Chin."

Conclusion

The Necessity of Autobiography

> Within the conceptual apparatuses that have governed our labeling of ourselves and others, a space is thus [through the recovery of cultural memory in autobiography] opened where multiplicity and diversity are affirmed. This space is not a territory staked out by exclusionary practices. Rather, it functions as a sheltering site, one that can nurture our differences without encouraging us to withdraw into new dead ends, without enclosing us within facile oppositional practices or sterile denunciations and disavowals. For it is only by imagining nonhierarchical modes of relation among cultures that we can address the crucial issues of indeterminacy and solidarity. These are the issues that compel us in this fin de siècle, for our "green dirt-ball" will survive only if we respect the differences among its peoples.
>
> Françoise Lionnet
> *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (5)

"There is only one question," said my friend and colleague Ann McKinnon one day, "and that is how can we all get along?" Perhaps there is no greater purpose to our work as intellectuals and teachers than to continually, stubbornly, persistently grapple with this question. It is a particularly important question to ask in second world locations at this contemporary moment, places that continue to be informed by the discourses of white supremacy and racism that are lingering legacies of settler colonialism. I say this from my own present location within Canada, a nation that has recently witnessed events that speak to the social injustices experienced by many of our citizens in this supposedly "post" colonial period: the armed standoff between Mohawks and the Canadian armed forces at Oka, only the most visible of the many protests Native peoples have waged against the continuing theft of their land and the exploitation of its resources; the failure of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords as constitutional negotiations aimed at redefining Canadian national identity, and especially the place of Quebec and aboriginal peoples within confederation (a failure

that is not necessarily cause for lament); shootings of black youths by white police officers in Montreal and Toronto; the outcry of black Canadians against the staging of a multi-million dollar production of the American musical *Showboat*, a show that reinforces stereotypes of happy black slaves; the ongoing debate about cultural appropriation and the particular problem of non-Native writers using the stories of Natives as if they were their own; the unresolved problem of the discrepancy between an official government-legislated policy of Multiculturalism and the disproportionately large number of white Canadians in positions of authority. And there are many more examples. Unequal distribution of power and resources among Canadians, unequal access to education, jobs, housing, and economic development, the continuing exploitation and oppression of First Nations peoples and people of colour, the ugly spectre of white supremacy--all of these social crises shape the place I call home.

It has been one of the implicit arguments of this study that these issues must be taken up in both the public and the private spheres, and I have suggested that autobiography is an important mode of literary writing in which the public and the private coincide. It is my belief that social change cannot be effectively legislated without a concomitant change in the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. Social change comes about through the statements and actions of individual people at the local level, statements and actions which, through sheer force of accumulation can create a critical mass that forces structural change. But people can only be motivated to change themselves, can only be made to understand the *need* to advocate and effect change--both at the personal and the public level--if they have a better understanding of how they came to be who they are *as* individuals and *as* members of particular social groups. Autobiography, it seems to me, is one way of getting there, for autobiography is a powerful apparatus of consciousness-raising--both for those who write and for those who read. I am not sure that an emancipatory social politics requires all of us to write our histories down and publish them as official autobiographies, but I do believe that it

requires each of us to become attuned to the contents and forms of our own subjectivities through engaging in processes of self-analysis and self-critique. For only through the conscious examination of how our subjectivities have been shaped by institutionalized ideologies and structures will we ever know who we are *as* subjects. We must all, in Lee Maracle's words, own our own histories, learn and acknowledge where we have come from, for only then will we know where we want to go in the future. This is both a moral and a political imperative, and it is one in which all Canadians and all Australians have a stake.

The utopian impulse of this project might be considered by some to be naïve. And yet I am not alone in believing that as critics we have a responsibility not only to critique but also to imagine alternative realities, to imagine better ways of being in the world. Furthermore, this project recognizes what has been one purpose of autobiography since its beginnings: an articulation of the examined life which serves not only the individual but also the community at large.[1] Autobiographers are model-makers. They write their lives in texts both as a process of self-enlightenment and self-education and so that others might benefit and learn from them. My own sense is that postcolonial autobiography--autobiography that exposes and counters imperialist domination, as it has been played out and settled upon people in particular locations at particular historical moments--has a similar moral imperative and a similar pedagogical effect. For autobiography carries with it at least the promise of reference: it offers a window into others' lives, and it assumes that those lives have both personal and cultural validity.

The matter of place is crucial in the process of self-analysis and self-critique I have been suggesting is at the heart of autobiographical practice, for individual and collective histories are always bound up with the places the subject occupies and inhabits. Further, places are positions from which to speak, and it is important to recognize that those speaking positions are contingent and constructed: certain things

can be said at particular moments and in particular places; other things cannot. We must learn about the places we occupy so that we can know not only on what terms and conditions these places have become available to us, but also so that we can recognize others' claims on these places. We must reconstruct local "spatial histories," to use Paul Carter's important concept once again. Although the world is becoming increasingly globalized, and national and even continental borders seem to be less and less meaningful, it seems to me that we must guard against celebrating and developing a global consciousness at the expense of forgetting about our own local investments in place. Certainly, the history of imperialism and the expansion of western capitalism have created global connections among places and peoples that must be attended to; nevertheless, local habitats are our first significant sites of identification, and we need to explore who we are *here*. For our local habitats are not simply the backdrop of our unique experiences: rather they are places with histories, places inscribed by many heterogeneous ideologies, places of contact with others, places of struggle. We must investigate how places have been shaped by people and how people shape places, and we must understand that we are all personally involved in that double process. Although we all live individual lives, we do not live in isolation, and one of the most urgent questions of a social critique based on constructing autobiographical "spatial histories" is who *else* is here and how do I relate to those others? What are the differences among us? What do we share in common? How might we invest ourselves personally in their struggles? How might they invest themselves in ours? These are the questions we must each ask ourselves in building non-oppressive, non-exploitative, non-imperial relations among all peoples.

To ask these questions in second world locations such as Canada and Australia means recognizing who pays the price of nation building. It is to acknowledge that settlement was not a neutral, benevolent enterprise but a process that involved acts of theft and genocide, as well as the imposition of alien laws and social structures on

aboriginal lands and peoples. It is also to recognize that white Europeans were not the only settlers, but that immigrant communities within Canada and Australia have their own long and embattled histories in, and their own particular relationships to, these places. And, crucially, it is also to recognize that the legacies of colonialism continue to inform the present moment. Land claim battles waged in the courts of both nations are a continuation of earlier, more bloody, territorial disputes fought between the first colonizers and aboriginal peoples. Struggles go on at other fronts too. And necessarily so, for, as North American Natives and Australian Aboriginals continue to assert, the period of colonization initiated when the first settlers "discovered" these lands has not yet come to an end. Neither nation enjoys a "post"-colonial social reality, if "post" is understood in a limited sense to refer to the phase following national independence. Even more reason to forge ahead, then, with the political project of decolonization, a project within which autobiography has an important role to play.

How cultural spaces might be decolonized is a primary interest of postcolonial literary and critical practices. It is precisely because the colonial period and its legacies have not come to an end that there is a need for ongoing postcolonial critique. In Australia, postcolonial work tends to focus on the treatment of Aboriginal peoples by white settlers and the continuing desire to cast off ties with Britain (Gunew, "Multicultural" 448). In Canada, as Donna Bennett explores at some length, the situation is somewhat more complicated, and postcolonial work has many reference points. Bennett notes that Canada has two "founding" imperial parents, Britain and France, and while French Canada might at one time have struggled for independence from the off shore authority of France, it now generally expresses its sense of colonialism in terms of being colonized by a dominant Anglophone society. Colonization is also a regional matter in Canada. The west (by which it is generally meant the three prairie provinces) frequently complains that it is colonized by the east, especially Ontario and even more especially Toronto. (In Australia, the inequality of

power between regions is generally expressed as a peripheral north colonized by a dominant south.) Finally, Canada can hardly think of itself as postcolonial when the only difference seems to be that it has been liberated from the political and cultural influence of two European imperial nations, England and France, only to become colonized by another imperialist foreign power, the United States. But the complexities of the Canadian situation, suggests Bennett, make Canadian literary writing particularly available to postcolonial critical readings, because postcolonial theories and methodologies are attentive to the competing voices of various cultural groups and the ambivalent relations of particular subjects to hegemonic ideologies of the nation. Further, Canadian literature represents a site where the postcolonial model itself can be tested (172). Postcolonial criticism focuses on both resistance to imperialism as it is discursively constituted and the articulation of hybrid, plural subjectivities shaped by intricate histories of invasion, settlement, and appropriation. A postcolonial critical practice, then, fosters new ways of reading "Canada" as a locus of multiple, sometimes conflicting investments and meanings, both past and present. But while it struggles for an emancipatory politics, a postcolonial critical practice must also attend to local cultural differences and the many complex histories of people and places that inform the nation. Obviously, being "post" in second world locations is never a simple matter of gaining political sovereignty.

Exploring the past is an important aspect of postcolonial critique. For those who have been colonized, the past can be reclaimed as a way of honouring histories of pain and struggle, but the past can also serve to transform present reality, to create a different future. It is necessary to remember and to revisit the past in order to know *how* to move forward and how *not* to repeat a repressive past. bell hooks, speaking of the function of memory in black American cultural production, notes that "[f]ragments of memory are not simply represented as flat documentary but constructed to give a 'new take' on the old, constructed to move us into a different mode of articulation" (147). hooks goes on

to describe how she has undertaken this retrospective journey through her own life "as part of a self-critical process where one pauses to reconsider choices and location" (147). This process, I argue, is fundamental to postcolonial autobiography.

Critics have often remarked that western forms of autobiography have traditionally functioned to secure bourgeois humanist European subjectivity. While this might be historically true, it does not mean that the genre cannot be made to function otherwise. As countless studies of autobiographies written by women, gays and lesbians, and people who identify themselves in terms of ethnicity, race, or physical ability have shown, the genre can be "used and abused" (the phrase is Linda Hutcheon's) in order to produce something else. It can be made to speak in contra/diction, *against* the oppressive ideologies--including normative straight white able-bodied male subjectivity--and *for* differences and multiplicities. Autobiography is a textual site where the very matter of subjectivity is put under investigation; thus, it is a genre that opens up the question of the subject. No matter how problematized the subject is, it can still be said to exist as the locus of an epistemology (though not necessarily "truth") (Paul Smith 100). Autobiography is the place where writers self-consciously attempt to understand the meanings of their experiences and the contents of their knowledges. No autobiographer is entirely free to make him or herself an autonomous entity; all are subjects who are shaped by the cultural contexts out of which they write, some of which cannot even be identified. But while it might be true that subjects are not completely free agents, this cannot be allowed to function as an alibi for the solidification of the status quo. My argument has been that in specifying those contexts, in digging around and through them, in uncovering what *counts* as experience and knowledge at particular moments and in particular locations, the autobiographical subject comes to some understanding both of how she has been named by others and how she names herself. This process is the first step towards resisting oppressive ideologies and making a different subject.

My project has been to explore the intricacies of different subjectivities shaped in Canadian and Australian social contexts. It has also been to locate an emancipatory discourse in autobiographical writing that is appropriate to the second world spaces of Canada and Australia and that could potentially suggest how these places, and the subjects who inhabit them, could be decolonized. By exploring the mutual imbrication of place and subjectivity, I have shown that the specific location of the subject constitutes a specific knowledge of the "I." The focus on place has necessitated my thinking about the intersection of the physical and the psychic, and this study traces a trajectory *outwards*, from the microcosm of the human body, to the detailed landscapes of home--particularly the childhood home--to the broader spheres of neighbourhoods and communities. My argument has been that subjects occupy each of these places as both material and conceptual environments. Each of these places--body, home, neighbourhood--is inscribed by the complex histories of settler colonialism and the discourses of race, ethnicity, gender, and nation that the European imperial project set in motion. In the attempt to articulate his or her subjectivity, to bring a life to language, the autobiographers studied here take up and explore at least one of these sites as a significant locus around which knowledges about the "self" are formed.

These knowledges, I have suggested, are initially grounded in the body. Bodies are polymorphous sites of both natural and cultural processes and effects, all of which work in combination to constitute a network of subjectivity. The body is the first psychic house; it not only contains the subject's sense of identity as a separate being in the world but it also locates a perspective from which the world is both read and named. Furthermore, as Elizabeth Grosz reminds us, bodies are always particular bodies. They are gendered and racialized, and they signify within culture as repositories of external meanings that have been projected onto them. Thus, in performing the kind of self-analysis and self-critique I have been advocating as crucial to a postcolonial autobiographical practice, it is necessary to attend to the specificity of the body and the

ways in which subjectivity is produced in relation to the body under colonial (or national) law.

The autobiographers studied here are all, to some extent at least, conscious of the ways in which they are partially or incompletely accommodated by the social spaces that represent their homes. For Malouf and Willis, that discomfort and uncertainty about belonging is focused on the body, the Native or ethnic Lebanese skin that cannot be eradicated or "whited out." But even the whitest of autobiographers can be ambivalently positioned in relation to structures of power. For Roy and Ker Conway, the issue of accommodation is closely bound to narrow nationalist definitions of Australian or Canadian identity. For Roy the problem is that she is a Francophone living as a cultural minority in a dominant Anglophone Canada. For Ker Conway the problem is that she is a woman living in a nation in which foundational masculine myths based in the pastoral bush worker tradition continue to inform the cultural milieu. Autobiography probably always evokes a sense of the meaning of home. For these writers, however, home is not a place within which it is always possible to assume a secure sense of the "self."

Indeed, home is a troublesome concept for many Canadians and Australians. In *Frontiers,* a collection of essays on racism and culture, M. Nourbese Philip inserts the following epigraph: "For Canada, in the effort of becoming a space of true true be/longing." The repetition of "true" implies the disjunction between the appearance of social equality, especially as it is inscribed by the official rhetoric of multiculturalism in Canada, and how non-white, non-European peoples actually experience life here. It also harks back to the national anthem and its confident assertion that Canada is "true North strong and free." While Canada might be North in relation to our neo-imperial neighbour, the United States, many Canadians feel neither "strong" nor "free" here. The slash in Nourbese Philip's inscription of "be/longing" highlights both the political struggle and the emotional investments that are involved in actually claiming Canada as

a true home. Immigrants--new settlers--might *long* to be in Canada, but they also long to *be* within Canadian space. That *being* is something to be worked for. And it is a struggle that all non-aboriginal peoples in Canada can recognize. No matter how many generations their ancestors have been here, all non-aboriginal Canadians used to belong elsewhere.

The challenge, then, is to recognize that a sense of belonging in second world locations is not something to be blindly asserted but something to be self-consciously and self-reflectively *made*. I have suggested that positing second world subjectivity based on a model of the multicultural neighbourhood is one approach that might not only break down the barriers between those who are inside a dominant mainstream group and those who are outside, but which might also foster redefinition of the mainstream itself, opening up diversity and plurality as genuinely *accommodated* ways of being. Such a model would allow for heterogeneity both *among* subjects of different groups, and *between* subjects of a particular group. But it would also--crucially--facilitate the recognition of areas of commonality and shared interest that could provide the ground for collaborative action and foster the development of equitable, integrated communities.

In my view, the autobiographies written by Lee Maracle and Sally Morgan are texts that make an important contribution to learning how to think of subjectivity around the concept of the multicultural neighbourhood. Maracle's text dramatizes the hard work that is involved in "owning your own history" and uncovering the many layers of discursive effects and events that constitute a particular subject in particular temporal and spatial locations. This text also suggests that the *process* is both necessary and rewarding, for it encourages understanding, both of ourselves and of others. Morgan's autobiography suggests that subjectivity is not necessarily exclusive, but that all subjects might be partly constituted through their involvement with the histories and experiences of others. Such involvement requires both an *investment* in others and a sense of

responsibility towards them. My argument has been that an investment in others--those who are our neighbours--is something that all citizens of second world nations must be motivated to make.

Through my readings of autobiographical texts, and through the process of writing fragments of my own, I have begun to investigate how this might be accomplished at the local level. Part of this project has been about defining my own histories with the significant places I have called home as a way of, in Gloria Anzaldúa's terms, "taking inventory." For me, this has meant going back to England, remembering my own original homeplace, and thinking about what attitudes and assumptions I carried with me on my journey here. It has meant uncovering my constitution as an English female subject with ancestral origins in the working class. No one growing up in England can be ignorant of class differences, and the fact that class *always* matters. My middle-class position within Canadian society now seems so obvious and so assured; but at times it also seems tenuous, as if at any minute I could slip up and betray my working- class roots. Similarly, my gender constantly gives away my relative powerlessness within this place I call home, despite my economic independence and level of education. Every woman comes face-to-face with the hard fact that her place is not really her own when she hesitates to go out alone after dark. My own ambivalent relation to structures of power and privilege perhaps explains why I have chosen to study the particular settler Canadian and Australian autobiographies that I have. Malouf, Roy, and Ker Conway are similarly ambivalently positioned in relation to the dominant structures that inform their respective places. It is my guess that *all* of us are constantly engaged in a process of defining and securing our relationship to particular places, even if that struggle is expressed as a silence or a disavowal. My concern has been with why this struggle is both necessary in these locations and potentially productive, for it is my suggestion that the rhetoric of place in autobiographical writing

might be read not only as a constitutive feature of subjectivity but also as part of the political project of decolonization.

The operative question of this study is "who is the subject *here*?" I can see three directions in which this question might be taken up and expanded upon in order to more thoroughly engage with matters of place and subjectivity in autobiographical literatures written from second world locations. First, this question necessitates engaging in close readings of particular subjects in relation to particular places and lived circumstances; thus it guards against critical readings that are structured around ideas of authenticity or the homogeneity of groups or communities. This is particularly important in relation to aboriginal autobiographical writing in Canada and Australia, which often tends to be read rather unproblematically as if the relation between the narrated "I" and the author were a simple one or as if the aboriginal subject were somehow essentially aboriginal. Critical readings that focus on matters of place require that the relations between particular subjects and particular places and communities be specified. Some important related questions might be these: How are ideas of indigeneity mobilized in aboriginal autobiography? How are representations of place related to traditional aboriginal discourses concerning human relationships to the land? How do legal and literary discourses around ideas of land ownership inform one another? What role do regional and tribal differences play? How are aboriginal subjectivities formulated in urban environments? Any one of these issues could produce more fully-articulated readings of aboriginal autobiography than are currently generally available. [2]

The question of place is also important to the closely related genre of travel writing. Although in recent years there has been much interest in travel writing, especially that which can be related to the European imperialist adventure into distant and foreign lands, there has been relatively little interest in how writers represent their travels or migrations within their own countries, what might be called *domestic* travel writing. The literatures of Canada and Australia, however, are rich with examples of

texts that deal with internal domestic travel. Because distances are huge and one region can be extraordinarily different from another, it is possible for Canadians and Australians to be foreigners in their own lands. How do writers negotiate differences at home? How are representations of place in domestic travel writing similar to or different from representations of place in travel writing that focuses on an alien elsewhere? Which places are written about most often, how are they represented, and what ideological function do such representations serve in the broader cultural sphere? What can be said, for instance, about Canadian texts such as Aritha van Herk's *Places Far From Ellesmere* or Rudy Wiebe's *Playing Dead*, both texts about travelling to the North? Or what about the complex relation of the autobiographical subject to Canada in Norman Levine's *Canada Made Me*, a text in which the autobiographer travels back to and then across Canada after having spent many years living in England? What kinds of subjectivities do such texts--Canadian travel writing *about* Canada--produce?

A critical focus on the relation between the subject and place is also obviously an important issue to raise in the context of immigrant literatures. Because immigrant subjectivities are shaped by at least two nations, two homes, two cultures, representations of place become particularly loaded with meaning. How are old and new places figured in these texts? What is the function of nostalgia? What strategies of accommodation and assimilation are either deployed or refused? How do the discourses of exile, nationalism, and multiculturalism function in these text? How do immigrant autobiographies challenge the structures and conventions of settler autobiography which is predominantly Anglo-Celtic? Both Canadian and Australian literatures are rich with autobiographies written by immigrants, and the wealth and complexity of the material warrant full-scale study. My own work has only grazed the surface of questions of immigrant subjectivity. Except for Malouf, the settler subjects I have looked at here are rather unconscious of their ethnicity, as whites often tend to be. But the experience of emigration and the quest to find a home in a new place is central to autobiographical

works such as Lolo Houbein's *Wrong Face in the Mirror: An Autobiography of Race and Identity*, Andrew Reimer's *Inside Outside*, Rosa Cappiello's *Oh, Lucky Country*, and David Martin's *My Strange Friend* in Australia, and, in Canada, George Woodcock's *Letter to the Past* and Frederick Philip Grove's *In Search of Myself*. Particularly challenging and intriguing would be texts such as Austin Clarke's *Growing up Stupid under the Union Jack* or Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* which locate the autobiographical subject almost exclusively outside of the new home.

The matter of how subjects are *located* subjects, then, is still very much open for discussion and debate, and the field of autobiography is ripe for further investigation in these directions. This study has opened up some issues that are important in enacting spatial analyses of subjectivities as they are represented in second world Canadian and Australian autobiographies. Each reading has taken for granted the fact that these locations are contested spaces, but they have also suggested that the anxieties and uncertainties around related concepts such as home, belonging, the nation, the body, land, and community need not necessarily be paralyzing. The tension between settler and aboriginal that has structured this study is foundational to subjectivities formed in these locations, but it is a tension that I believe is ultimately productive, not divisive. This tension could potentially provoke ways of reimagining second world nation spaces where more equitable relations among diverse peoples could be achieved. The aim must be integration, not assimilation; sharing of common space, not segregation. Investigating our own individual histories with the places we occupy, understanding how we are all implicated in the processes of settlement, dispossession, and oppression that have characterized these histories, and imagining how these histories might be altered in the future is both a political imperative and an ethical responsibility. Autobiography, it seems to me, is one textual place in which the work is already begun.

I wish I could end this study with an anecdote taken from my own life which would triumphantly exemplify the kind of decolonized subjectivity I have imagined in terms of the multicultural neighbourhood. I wish that I could even relate a tale about how wonderful my experience of inhabiting such a neighbourhood thirteen years ago was. I wish that I could present myself as the hero of my own narrative. But the truth is that my few months spent living in the Kensington Market area of Toronto were only partly successful. Yes, I enjoyed shopping at the market. I enjoyed the smells of the place (not all of them sweet). And I liked the fact that I could buy cheese from an Italian, bread from a Portuguese, spices, rice, and coffee from a Latin American, and vegetables from a West Indian. I liked to hear all of the different languages being spoken, none of which I understood. And I liked to hear bouzouki music compete with Reggae. But I appreciated all of this mainly for its entertainment value. I experienced it as if watching a show in which I was the audience, they the performers. I selected food stuffs and handed over money, but I didn't actually speak to anyone. In fact, I preferred to conduct my business through a series of silent gestures and unspoken understandings. If I didn't know what a particular vegetable was or how to prepare it, I wouldn't ask the shopkeeper. If I didn't understand what the codes of behaviour associated with a particular shop were, I wouldn't enter it. I moved about in careful isolation. At times I felt nervous. Out of my element. Sometimes I felt overwhelmed by all of the strangeness. Sometimes I felt afraid.

Yes, I have been xenophobic.

In the university I encounter many people whose backgrounds are different from my own, and I take up the issue of negotiating cultural differences within Canada as a topic of my research and teaching. The university seems like a safe space within which to raise these issues. But what makes the university seem "safe"? Or why does it feel "safe" <u>for</u> me? For whom and under what conditions might a Canadian university not be a "safe" space? I have to watch my language, both in the classroom and outside of

it. I slip up. I catch myself at times, referring to (say) Japanese or Native Canadians as "them," as if such people were somehow not part of the larger category covered by the term "Canadian." I struggle to find non-exclusionary language. I struggle to open up the categories. I struggle to be conscious of how the language of difference is being deployed within specific situations, and I try to train my ear to hear the subtle resonances and effects of such language. I struggle to be conscious of not just what I say but why I say it. Where my words come from.

My work is begun. It is difficult. It necessarily continues.

Notes

[1] Margo Culley argues that the imperative to tell one's own life as an act of service to the community is a feature characteristic of American autobiography which traces its roots to Puritan conversion narratives. Although the address to the community of readers may not be explicit in postcolonial autobiography, I find that a similar sense of public service is evident, although its motive is generally political rather than spiritual.

[2] It has been my experience that most critiques of aboriginal autobiography have been rather superficial. This is particularly true in Canadian literary criticism where aboriginal texts, if they are discussed at all, are read as fairly straightforward documentary accounts which provide interesting sociological data. Often several texts are discussed in a single article, with the result that only the most cursory attention is paid to any one text. Critics--especially non-aboriginal critics--also tend to be wary of bringing sophisticated critical and theoretical tools and methods to bear upon aboriginal material. This hesitancy to bring Euro-American theory to aboriginal writing is generally understood as a sign that the critic is self-conscious of the situatedness of his or her knowledge; however, to read aboriginal autobiographies as any less complex and sophisticated than other texts is to insult them.

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